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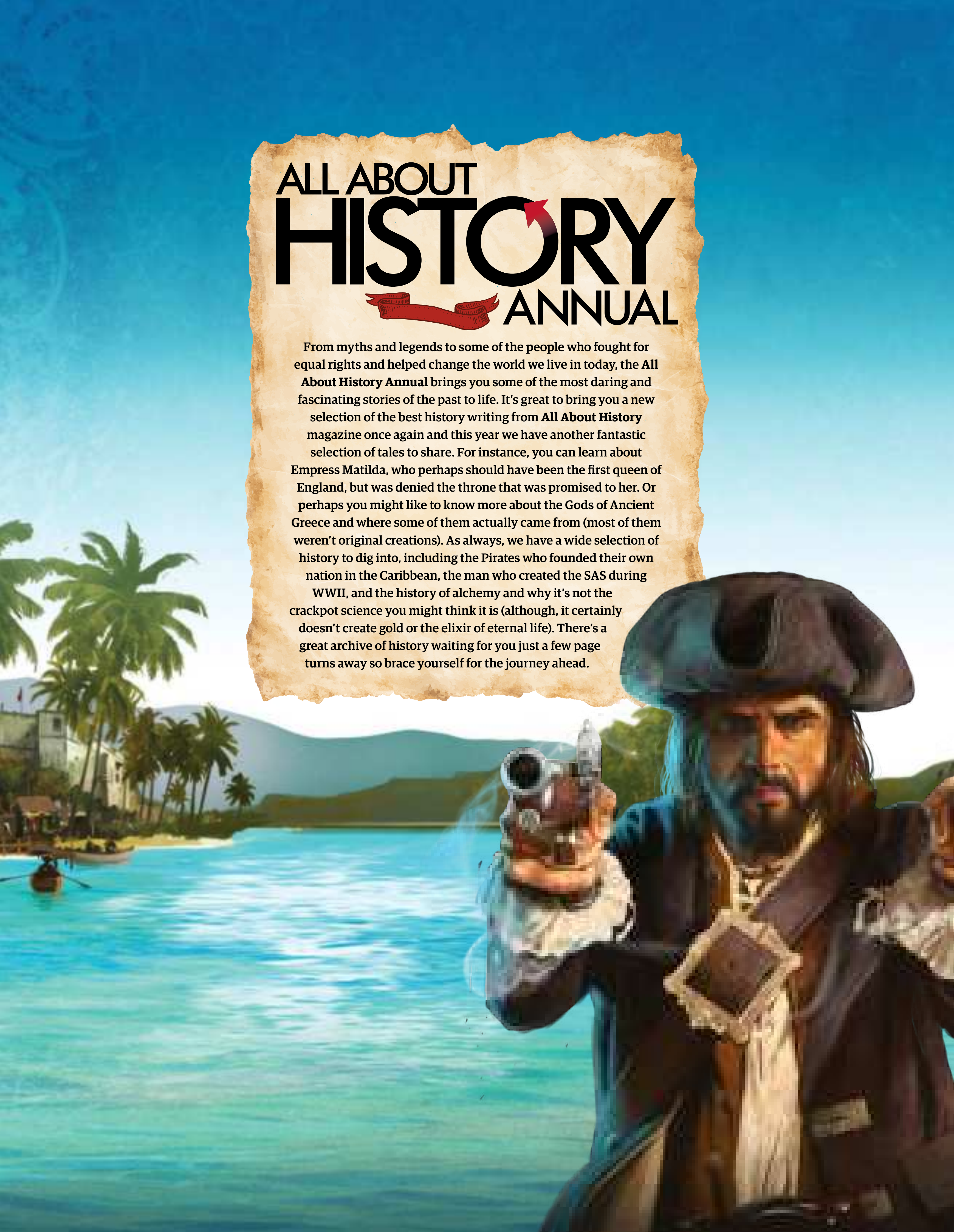

ALL ABOUT HISTORY ANNUAL

From myths and legends to some of the people who fought for equal rights and helped change the world we live in today, the **All About History Annual** brings you some of the most daring and fascinating stories of the past to life. It's great to bring you a new selection of the best history writing from **All About History** magazine once again and this year we have another fantastic selection of tales to share. For instance, you can learn about Empress Matilda, who perhaps should have been the first queen of England, but was denied the throne that was promised to her. Or perhaps you might like to know more about the Gods of Ancient Greece and where some of them actually came from (most of them weren't original creations). As always, we have a wide selection of history to dig into, including the Pirates who founded their own nation in the Caribbean, the man who created the SAS during WWII, and the history of alchemy and why it's not the crackpot science you might think it is (although, it certainly doesn't create gold or the elixir of eternal life). There's a great archive of history waiting for you just a few page turns away so brace yourself for the journey ahead.

FUTURE

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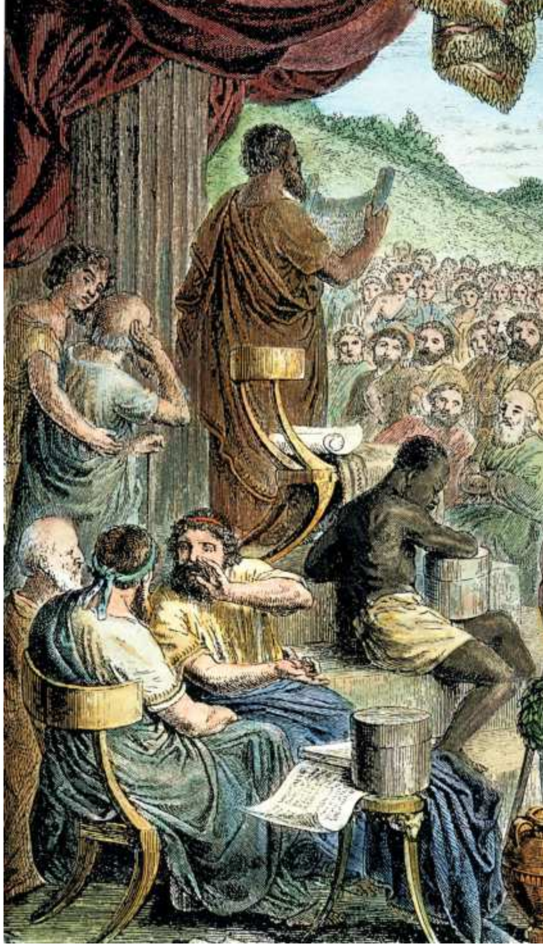


REAL HISTORY OF THE GLADIATORS

Brutal reality of Rome's most famous bloodsport uncovered

Written by Dr Christopher Epplett

One of the most well-known legacies of Ancient Rome is the spectator events of the arena, in particular gladiatorial contests. Some may be familiar with Roman institutions such as the Plebeian Council or the Centuriate Assembly, but almost everyone has heard of the gladiators and the Colosseum. This is due in no small part to Hollywood blockbusters like *Spartacus* and *Gladiator*. The historical accuracy of most of these cinematic depictions, however, often leaves something to be desired and there are many aspects of the gladiatorial phenomenon that are commonly overlooked in popular culture.

One topic of debate among historians has been the origin of gladiatorial contests. Such combat existed in Italy prior to its emergence in Rome, but a consensus beyond this has been difficult to achieve. Some researchers argue that gladiators originated in the Etruscan society of north-central Italy, a belief based largely upon ancient testimony that the term 'lanista', the standard Roman word for a gladiatorial trainer, was Etruscan in origin. However, the preponderance of available evidence seems to support the idea that gladiatorial combat originated among the Campanians of south-central Italy. A series of late 4th century BCE tomb-paintings from Campania, for example, depict duels between armed men reminiscent of later gladiatorial combat in Rome. And the Roman historian Livy records that Rome's Campanian allies during the same period were in the practice of dressing up gladiators in the armour of their enemy, the Samnites, and forcing them to fight duels to entertain guests at banquets.

EXPERT BIO

DR CHRISTOPHER EPPLETT

© Chris Yauck Photography

Dr Epplett teaches history at the University of Lethbridge in Canada, with a focus on ancient military and social history, particularly in the Roman world. His books include *Gladiators: Deadly Arena Sports of Ancient Rome* and *Gladiators and Beast Hunts*.

The earliest recorded gladiatorial duels in Rome were staged in a funerary context, a far cry from the later massive spectacles of the Colosseum. In 264 BCE, for example, the sons of Decimus Junius Brutus staged a combat involving three pairs of gladiators in the Forum Boarium ('Cattle Market') for their deceased father. In these early funerary events the fighting skill of the participants, as well as the blood they spilled, was meant to honour the deceased, an obligation that those staging such events were happy to fulfil. This idea of family obligation towards dead relatives, or the obligation of later Roman magistrates to stage combat events for thousands of spectators, was central to such contests. In fact, one of the most common terms used for the spectacles of the arena, 'munus' ('munera' in the plural), means 'duty'.

▶

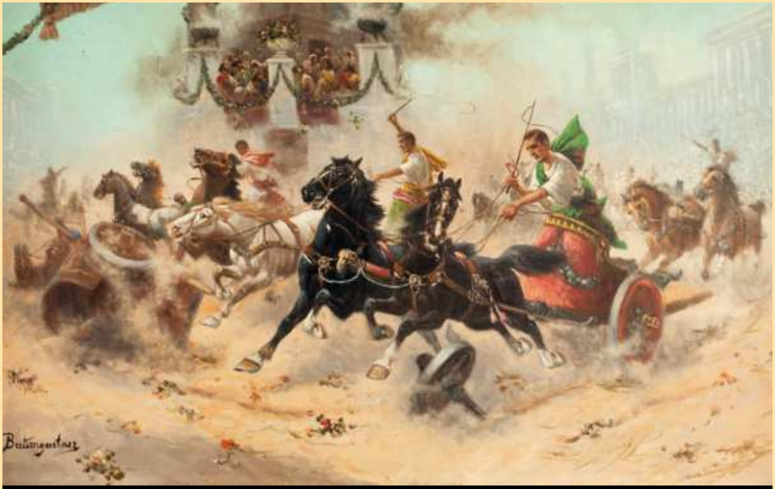
Illustrations by: Joe Cummings

ROME'S MOST POPULAR SPORTS

The great arenas of Ancient Rome hosted all manner of spectacular - and often lethal - events that drew massive crowds

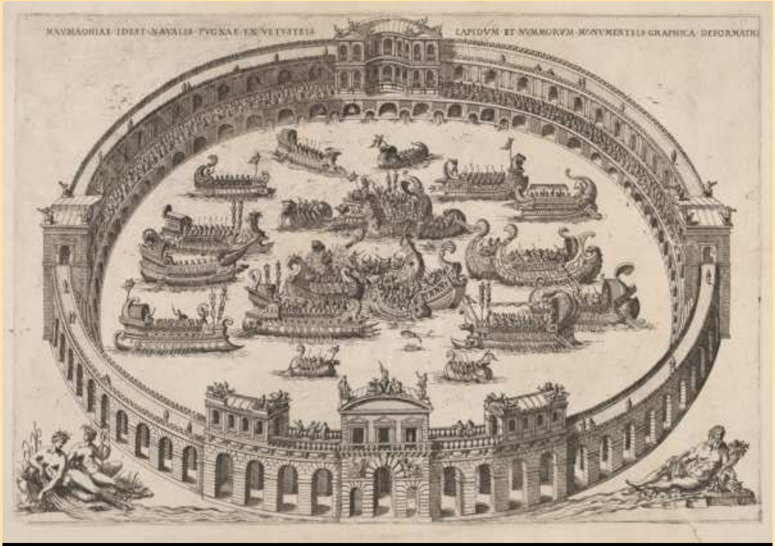
WILD BEASTS

Roman crowds would start their day out at the arena watching huntsmen showing off their skills. Exotic wild beasts from the far-flung corners of the Roman Empire, such as elephants and lions, would also be thrown together in combat. Arenas would be decorated with trees and shrubs to enhance the bloodthirsty spectacle. Audiences also liked watching men being pitted against these animals, and huge crowds flocked to see convicted criminals getting mauled to death.



CHARIOT RACING

Chariot racing was one of the few sports women were permitted to watch. Up to 150,000 people would pack the long, narrow Circus Maximus on Palatine Hill as teams of charioteers risked life and limb completing seven anti-clockwise laps. Chariots would typically be pulled by four horses but in some races more were used. A typical race would feature 12 chariots and fatal accidents were commonplace as the riders jostled for position. Crashed chariots were referred to as 'naufragia', which translates as 'shipwrecks'.


NAVMACHIAE · IDEST · NAVALIS · PVGNAE · EX · VETVSTIS
LAPIDVM · ET · NVMMORVM · MONVMENTIS · GRAPHICA · DEFORMATIO

SEA BATTLES

The huge space of the amphitheatres would be flooded with water to stage gigantic naval battles. This took place at both the Colosseum and Circus Maximus, where small ancient vessels would battle it out. It tapped into the Roman love of a great spectacle and appealed to an emperor's penchant for showing off. The men who fought were called 'naiunachiarii' and they were mostly captives or condemned criminals.

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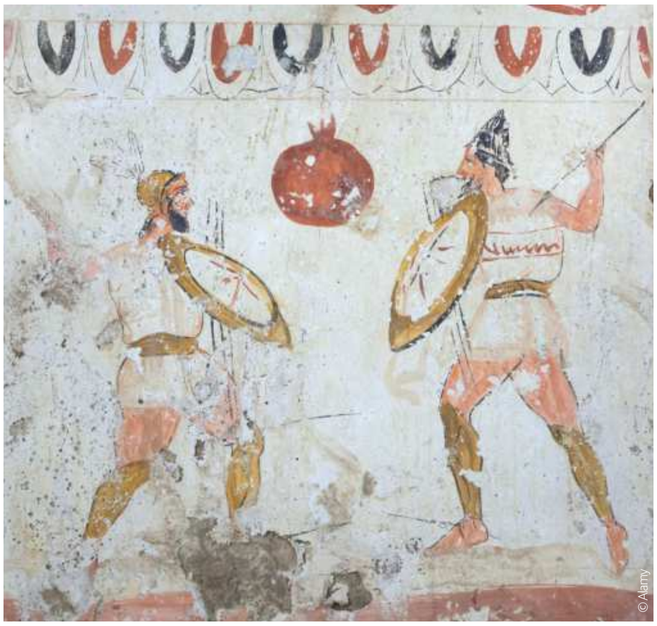
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ABOVE Scene from a 4th century BCE south-Italian tomb-painting depicting two warriors. Such evidence has led many scholars to propose gladiatorial combat originated in the Campanian area

Gladiatorial events gradually became larger and more popular in Rome over the succeeding decades. A truly decisive point in terms of their scale appears to have been reached with the disastrous defeat that the Carthaginian general Hannibal inflicted upon the Romans at Cannae in 216 BCE during the Second Punic War. The deep insecurity that the Romans felt in the aftermath of Cannae evidently led them to desire seeing more and more gladiators, who could be thought of as symbolising their opponents on the battlefield, killed for their entertainment. Certainly, the size of gladiatorial events grew dramatically in the period after Cannae: in the same year as the battle three days of funerary games staged for a certain Marcus Aemilius Lepidus in the Roman forum featured 44 gladiators, while in 183 BCE an event of similar duration dedicated to Publius Licinius involved 120.

As might be expected, the earliest gladiators reflected the groups and ethnicities against which Rome was currently fighting or had recently fought: the 'Samnite' type, followed by the 'Thracians' and 'Gauls', broadly reflected the course of Roman territorial expansion in the Republic. The weapons and armour borne by these types of gladiators, of course, reflected to a degree the equipment used by their namesakes. The characteristic weapon of the 'Thracian' gladiator, for example, was a type of curved sword that was native to the lower Danube region.

> “THE DEEP INSECURITY THAT THE ROMANS FELT IN THE AFTERMATH OF CANNAE EVIDENTLY LED THEM TO DESIRE SEEING MORE AND MORE GLADIATORS”

Gladiatorial combat, however, was not the only form of violent spectacle that enjoyed popularity during this period. The venationes, or beast-hunts, also became a staple of Roman arena events beginning in the early 2nd century BCE. Like the gladiatorial contests, these spectacles were not entirely a Roman invention, but evolved from precedents found elsewhere. One such forerunner was the widespread cross-cultural custom of rulers displaying and/or hunting various exotic animals as a demonstration of their alleged mastery over nature.

The Romans staged a procession of exotic animals in 275 BCE and another 25 years later, both of which featured spoils of war: namely, the war elephants that the Romans had recently captured from Pyrrhus and the Carthaginians. Over the succeeding decades such processions, staged in venues like the Circus Maximus (the great chariot-racing stadium of Rome), were ever more frequently organised in peacetime as well. By the end of the 3rd century BCE, displays of African animals like ostriches had become quite common.

The fate of the animals involved in these early processions is not certain. The first explicitly attested venatio in Rome, in which animals were not merely displayed but also killed for the public's amusement, occurred in 186 BCE when Marcus Fulvius Nobilior staged such an event to celebrate his recent military victories. The factors behind Nobilior's decision to introduce a violent element into his animal spectacle are not certain. It may be that contemporary Romans, increasingly enamoured of bloody entertainment, found non-violent animal processions somewhat boring in comparison.

The dramatic expansion of Rome in the last two centuries of the Republic provided ample scope for the further growth of such events. The tens of thousands of military prisoners captured by the Romans during this period were a ready source of forced recruits for the arena. Similarly, the annexation of territory in such regions as Asia Minor, Syria and north Africa provided ready access to a large number of exotic animals such as lions, thereby allowing spectacle organisers (editores) to increase further the variety and resultant popularity of their events.

As the arena spectacles grew in both scope and popularity, the various aspects of their production gradually became more organised. By the late Republic, for example, Roman magistrates staged munera on a regular basis, often as a means of securing popular support for upcoming elections in the city. By the late Republic several ludi, or training-schools for the arena, were owned by wealthy Romans, along with various familiae, groups of gladiators and their requisite support and training personnel. It was these groups that supplied the

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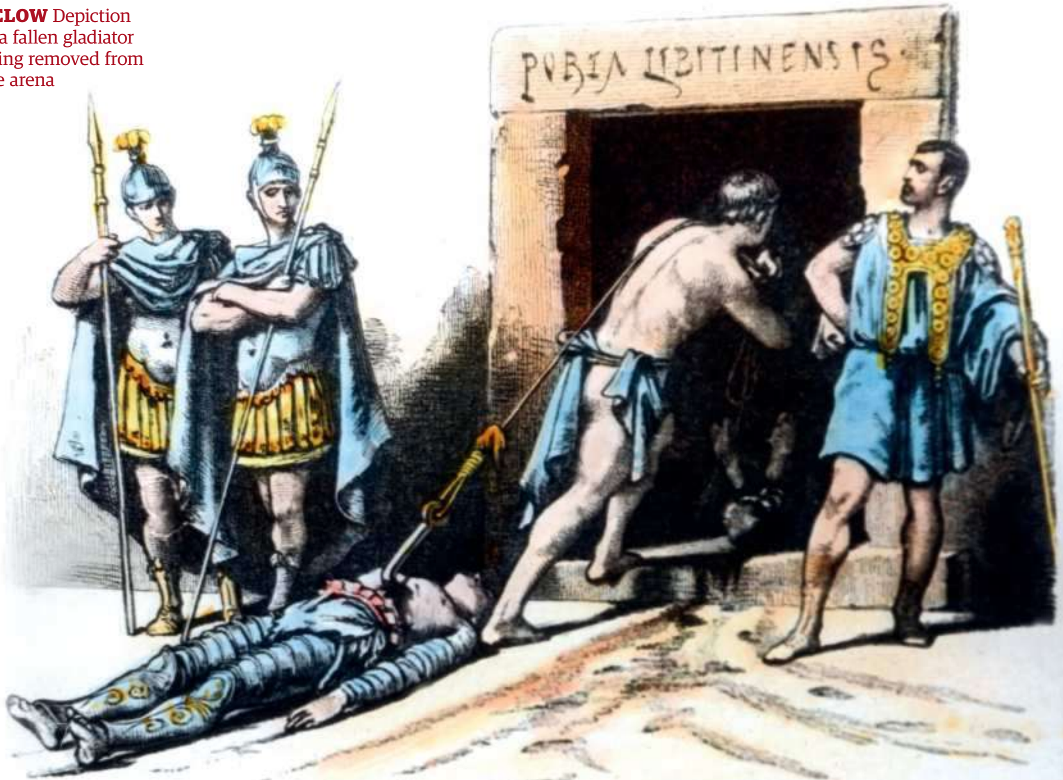
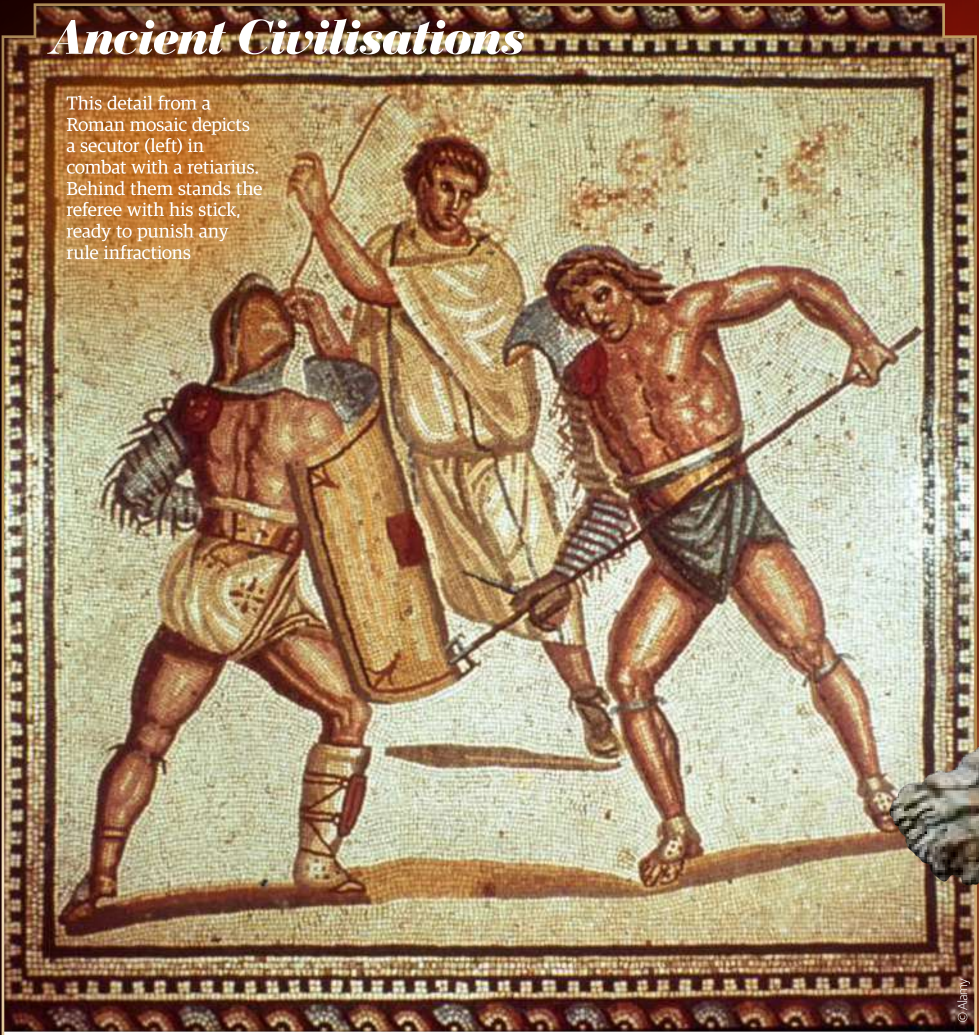
BELOW Depiction of a fallen gladiator being removed from the arena





This detail from a Roman mosaic depicts a secutor (left) in combat with a retiarius. Behind them stands the referee with his stick, ready to punish any rule infractions

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massive late-Republican spectacles of prominent Romans like Pompey and Julius Caesar. The most famous of these Republican ludi was located at Capua in southern Italy, from which Spartacus and his followers escaped and began their insurrection against the Roman state in 73 BCE.

At the same time as the organisation and infrastructure of arena spectacles became more sophisticated, the structures in which they were staged gradually became more elaborate as well. The earliest gladiatorial and animal events in Rome were staged in venues originally built for other purposes, which offered ample space and/or seating. Venationes and other animal events were commonly staged on the level track of the Circus Maximus that ran around the arena for chariot racing, while gladiatorial contests often took place in the open space of the Roman forum. In the last two centuries BCE, alterations and additions were made at both of these locations to facilitate such events. Iron animal cages, for example, were added to the Circus Maximus, while wooden balconies known as maeniana were added to a number of buildings surrounding the open space of the Roman forum for the convenience of spectators attending the events.

The building most associated with the Roman munera, of course, is the amphitheatre. The earliest stone amphitheatre in Italy, dating to approximately 70 BCE, is found not in Rome, however, but in Pompeii. One of the main reasons why no amphitheatres predating the Colosseum exist in Rome today is that, because of a longstanding senatorial ban on the building of such permanent spectator venues during the Republic, many of the structures that were erected for various munera during that period were temporary.

> “JULIUS CAESAR STAGED A COMBAT BETWEEN CAVALRY, 40 ELEPHANTS AND ABOUT 500 INFANTRY IN THE CIRCUS MAXIMUS”

The growth of the munera over the last few centuries of the Republic culminated in the spectacles of Caesar. As part of his quadruple triumph in 46 BCE, Caesar staged a combat between cavalry, 40 elephants and approximately 500 infantry in the Circus Maximus, as well as both venationes and gladiatorial

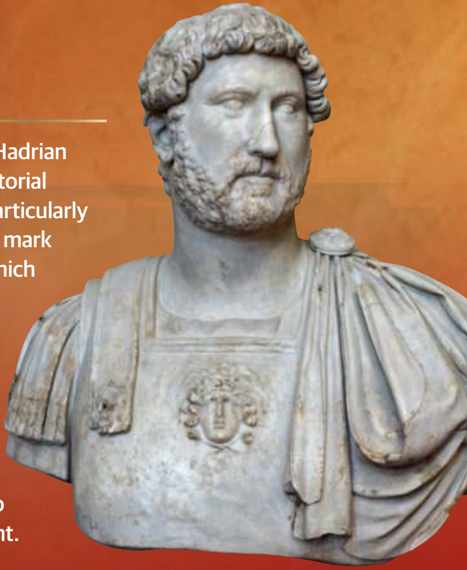
EMPERORS IN THE ARENA

The glamour of victory might have enticed even the most powerful men in Rome

CALIGULA

Reign: 37-41 CE

The reign of Caligula is an infamous chapter of Roman history, although contemporary records are rather biased against the emperor, making it hard to decipher fact from malicious fiction. One story about Caligula claims that when those accused of treason were sentenced to public execution he sometimes fought them as gladiators.



HADRIAN

Reign: 117-138 CE

Like many emperors, Hadrian was a big fan of gladiatorial games and put on a particularly extravagant display to mark his 43rd birthday in which hundreds of animals were slaughtered and gifts were thrown into the crowd. Hadrian also took part in some staged fights in which there was no risk of death to himself or his opponent.

COMMODUS

Reign: 177-192 CE

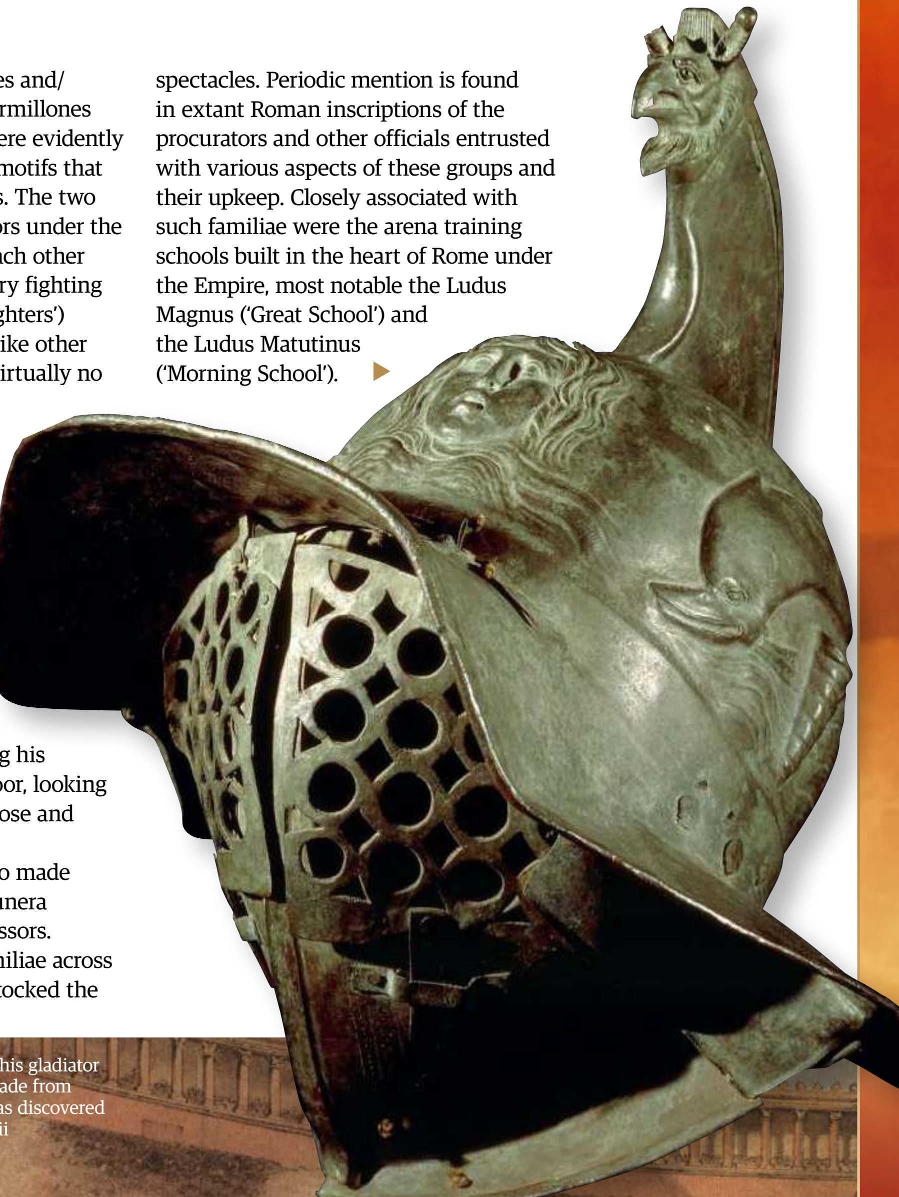
Most famously portrayed in the film *Gladiator*, Commodus did indeed venture into the arena to show off his prowess with a blade. Rather than taking on prominent gladiators, however, he preferred to face off against beasts or fighters who would immediately submit to him after receiving a wound.

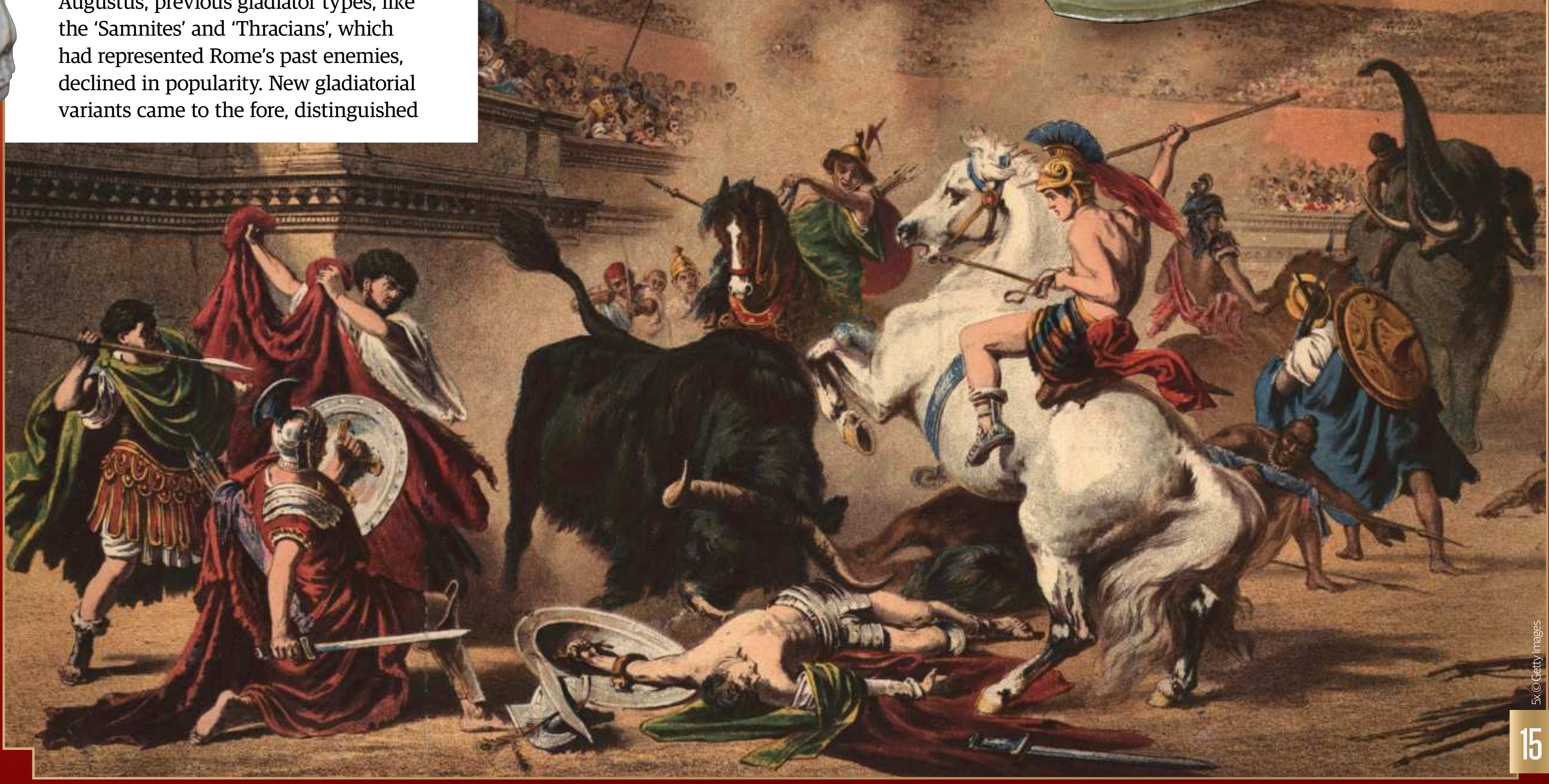
munera in the Roman forum. For the latter events, he not only erected a temporary 'hunting-theatre' in the middle of the forum but even had a number of subterranean galleries built beneath it. These galleries held the animals and equipment that were to be used in the spectacle above. Caesar also put on a massive naumachia, or staged naval combat, involving thousands of prisoners of war, in an artificial basin that was probably located in the Campus Martius.

It was under Rome's first emperor, Augustus, that the pattern was largely set for the subsequent munera of the Empire. First, the staging of arena spectacles basically became the exclusive preserve of the emperors, their family members and their close associates. Augustus, after the recent civil wars that had spelled an end to the Republic, realised the danger of a potential usurper using such events to build up his public support, and thereby sought to ensure that only the emperor and his inner circle would reap the popularity gained through staging munera. In addition, the typical sequence of events in a given day's entertainment had become established by the end of his reign: a typical day's munera would feature venationes in the morning, criminal executions during the midday pause and gladiatorial contests in the afternoon.

The early Empire also witnessed a much greater variety of gladiator types, which no doubt increased the enjoyment of contemporary spectators. With the sense of security brought to Rome by Augustus, previous gladiator types, like the 'Samnites' and 'Thracians', which had represented Rome's past enemies, declined in popularity. New gladiatorial variants came to the fore, distinguished by their differing fighting styles and/or unique equipment. The murmillones ('fish-fighters'), for example, were evidently so named because of the fish motifs that decorated their ornate helmets. The two most popular types of gladiators under the Empire, often pitted against each other because of their complementary fighting styles, were the retiarii ('net-fighters') and secutores ('followers'). Unlike other gladiators, the retiarius wore virtually no armour. Instead, he depended upon his speed and agility for survival. The standard tactic of the retiarius was to try and entangle his slower-moving adversary in his throwing-net (rete) and then finish him off with his trident. The secutor, who was armed in a more conventional manner, was so named because of his tactic of stalking his opponent around the arena floor, looking for an opportunity to slip in close and attack with his sword.

Important changes were also made to the infrastructure of the munera under Augustus and his successors. First, the emperors owned familiae across the Empire with which they stocked the spectacles. Periodic mention is found in extant Roman inscriptions of the procurators and other officials entrusted with various aspects of these groups and their upkeep. Closely associated with such familiae were the arena training schools built in the heart of Rome under the Empire, most notable the Ludus Magnus ('Great School') and the Ludus Matutinus ('Morning School').





BELOW Animals were frequently thrown into the arena to be killed

RIGHT This gladiator helmet made from bronze was discovered in Pompeii

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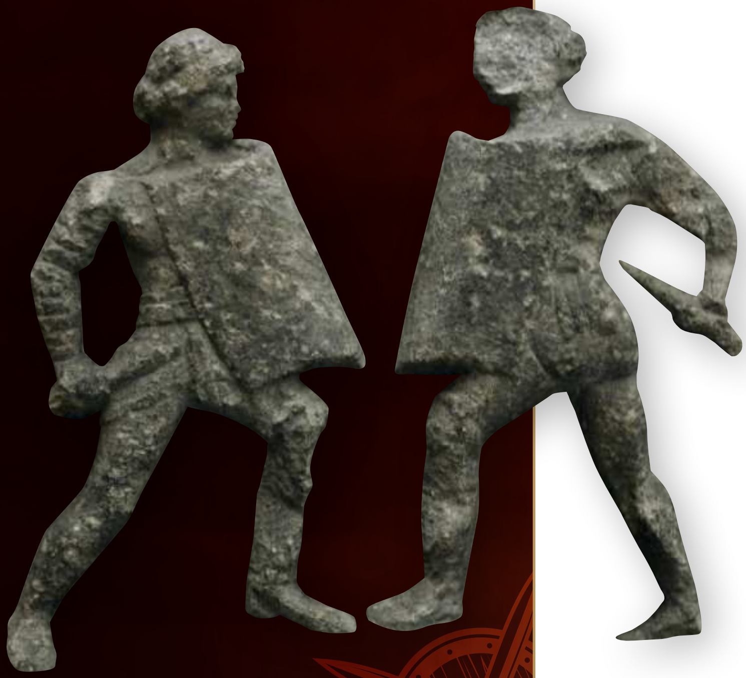


ENTER THE GLADIATRIX

The reality of women in the arena

This 1st or 2nd century CE relief sculpture (above), from the city of Halicarnassus in the Greek-speaking eastern Empire, is clear evidence that the popularity of female gladiators was not limited to Rome alone. 'Amazon', on the left, is depicted in combat with 'Achillia' on the right. The Greek word above them, 'apeluthesan' ('they were released'), suggests that the two combatants fought to a draw.

As was common in gladiatorial munera, the prowess of the fighters in this instance was likened to that of famous figures of myth. The name 'Amazon', of course, recalls the famed female warriors of Greek legend, while the name 'Achillia' is the female form of the name Achilles, the latter being the mightiest of the Greek heroes who fought in the Trojan War. One of Achilles' most notable exploits was killing the Amazon queen, Penthesilea, in single combat outside the walls of Troy, and the duel in Halicarnassus may have been intended to remind spectators of that famous combat from Greek myth.

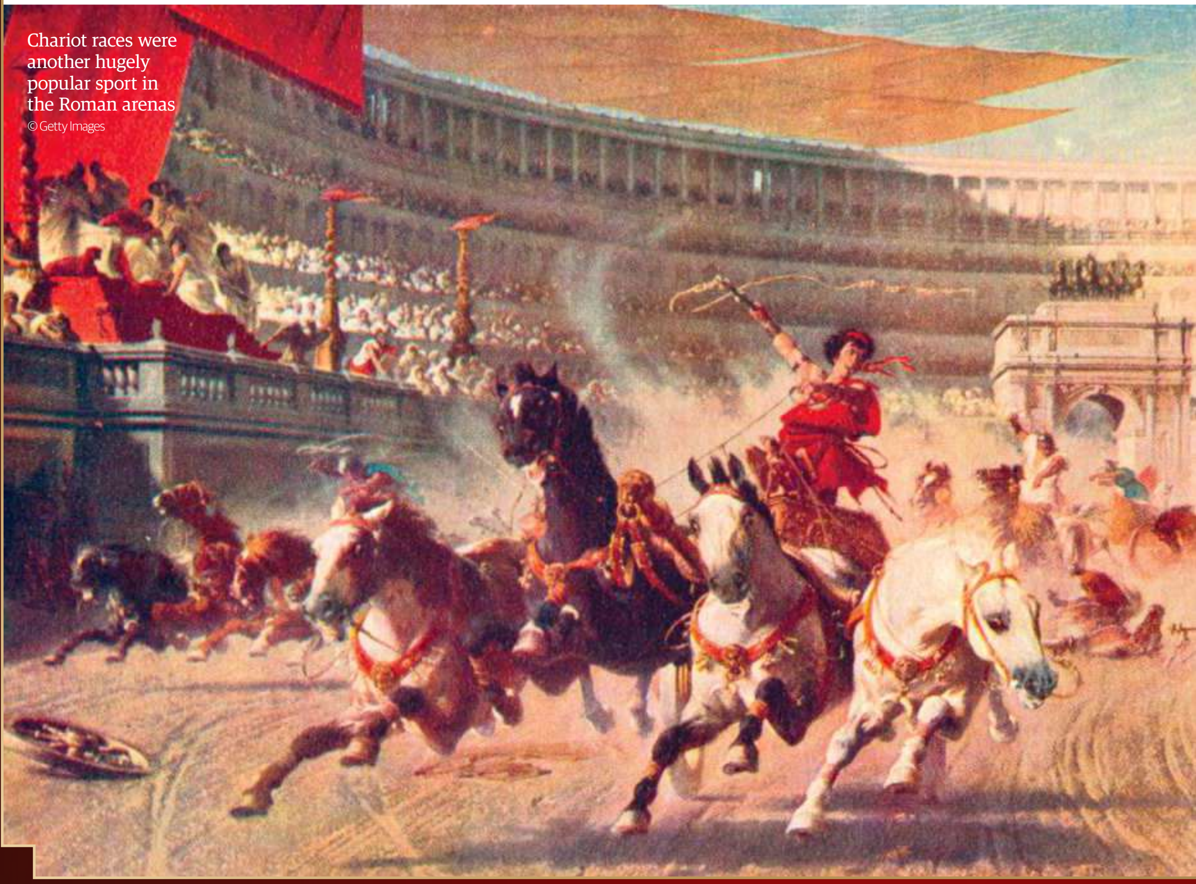
The term 'gladiatrix' is a modern one as there does not appear to be a Latin term for female warriors from this era. The contemporary opinion on women warriors was mixed, however, with some commentators such as Juvenal claiming it shamed the women involved. It seems some rulers agreed as bans on female gladiators were frequent, such as that imposed by Septimius Severus in 200 CE.

The former was the principal training facility for gladiators in the city, while the latter, so named because the venationes were normally staged in the morning, was designed for the training of beast-hunters and their animal charges. The date when these schools was built is not certain, but the available evidence suggests that they may have been constructed during the Flavian dynasty (69-96 CE). In such a case, the construction of these ludi would have been closely connected with the building of the most famous structure erected in Rome under the Flavians: the Colosseum. Interestingly enough, the basements of both the Ludus Magnus and Ludus Matutinus appear to have been connected by corridors to the nearby amphitheatre, which would have facilitated the movement of performers and equipment prior to a show.

The building of the Colosseum was a great coup for the Flavians: not only did it fulfill a long-standing need for a permanent amphitheatre in Rome befitting the capital of an empire, but it also served as a wildly successful public relations gesture for the new dynasty. Prior to the Flavians' rise to power, its site had been occupied by an artificial lake on the grounds of the previous emperor Nero's magnificent private estate, the so-called Domus Aurea ('Golden House'). When the first Flavian emperor, Vespasian, took the throne in 69 CE he hit upon the idea of taking the space in the heart of Rome that Nero had selfishly reserved for himself and opening it up to the public in the form of a massive new amphitheatre. The new facility took its most common name, the Colosseum, from the colossal statue that originally stood beside it. During Nero's reign, this statue had borne his likeness, but after his downfall the image of the hated former emperor was erased and replaced with the more acceptable visage of the sun god, Sol. Fortunately for Vespasian, when he decided to begin this massive construction project, the large amount of money needed was not an issue. As an extant inscription informs us, booty seized from the recent suppression of the Jewish revolt against Roman authority was devoted to this undertaking.

> “THIS MAGNIFICENT NEW ENTERTAINMENT STRUCTURE IN THE HEART OF ROME WAS THE PINNACLE OF AMPHITHEATRE DESIGN”

This magnificent new entertainment structure in the heart of Rome represented



Chariot races were another hugely popular sport in the Roman arenas

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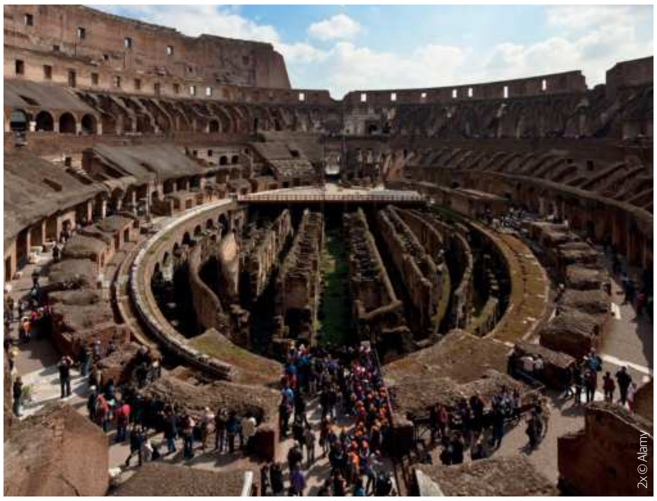
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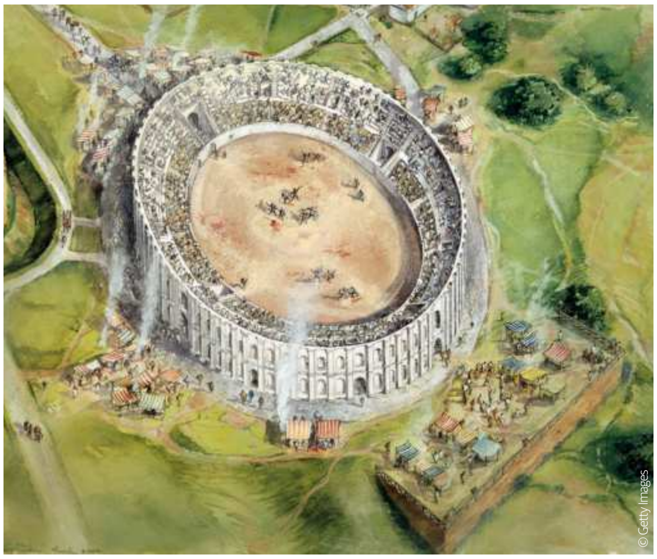
ABOVE The remains of the Colosseum in Rome. The galleries of the basement (hypogeum) in the centre once held almost 200 animal cages

BELOW A reconstruction of the Chester Roman Amphitheatre, built near the Deva Victrix fort around 100 CE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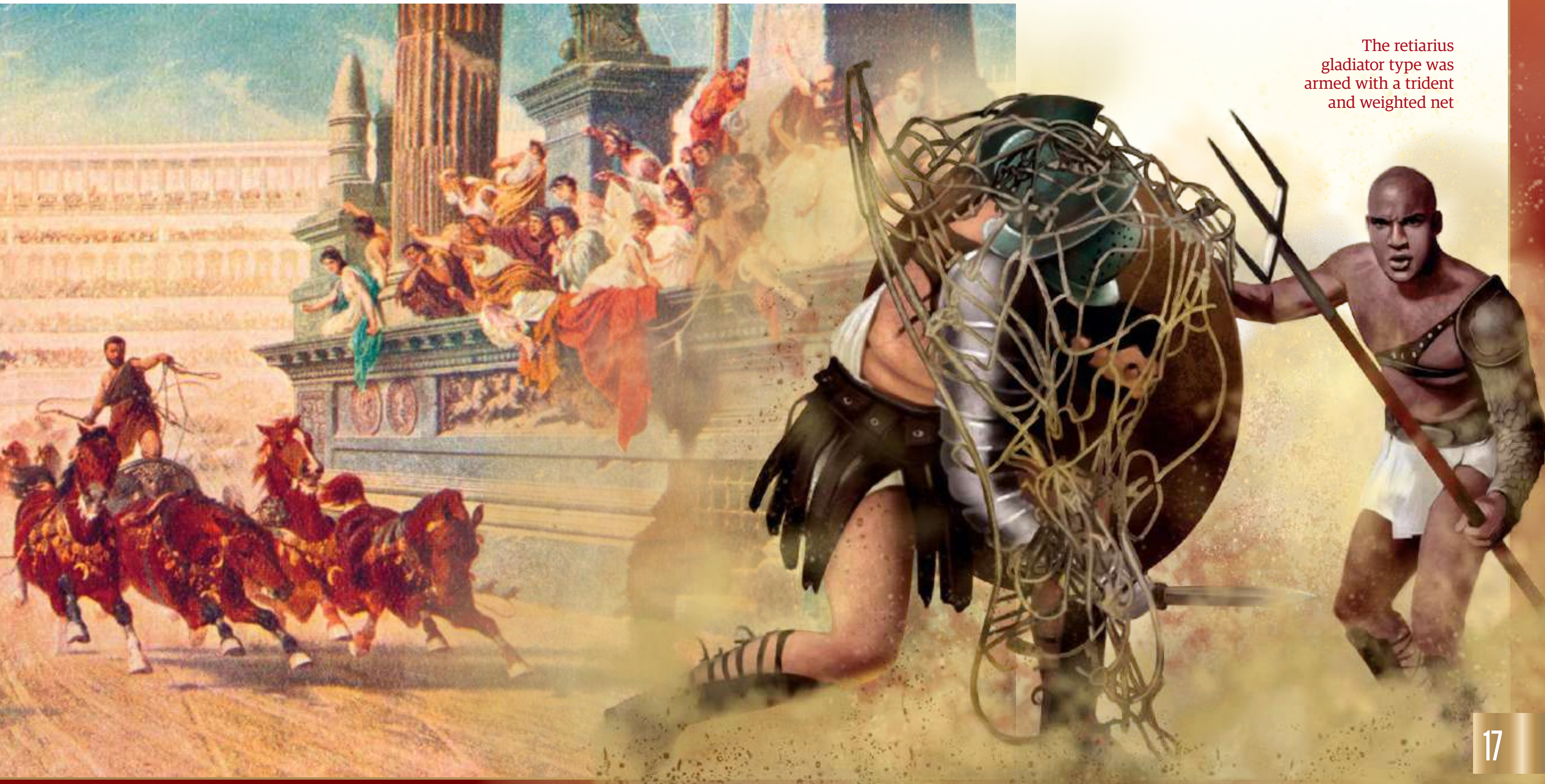
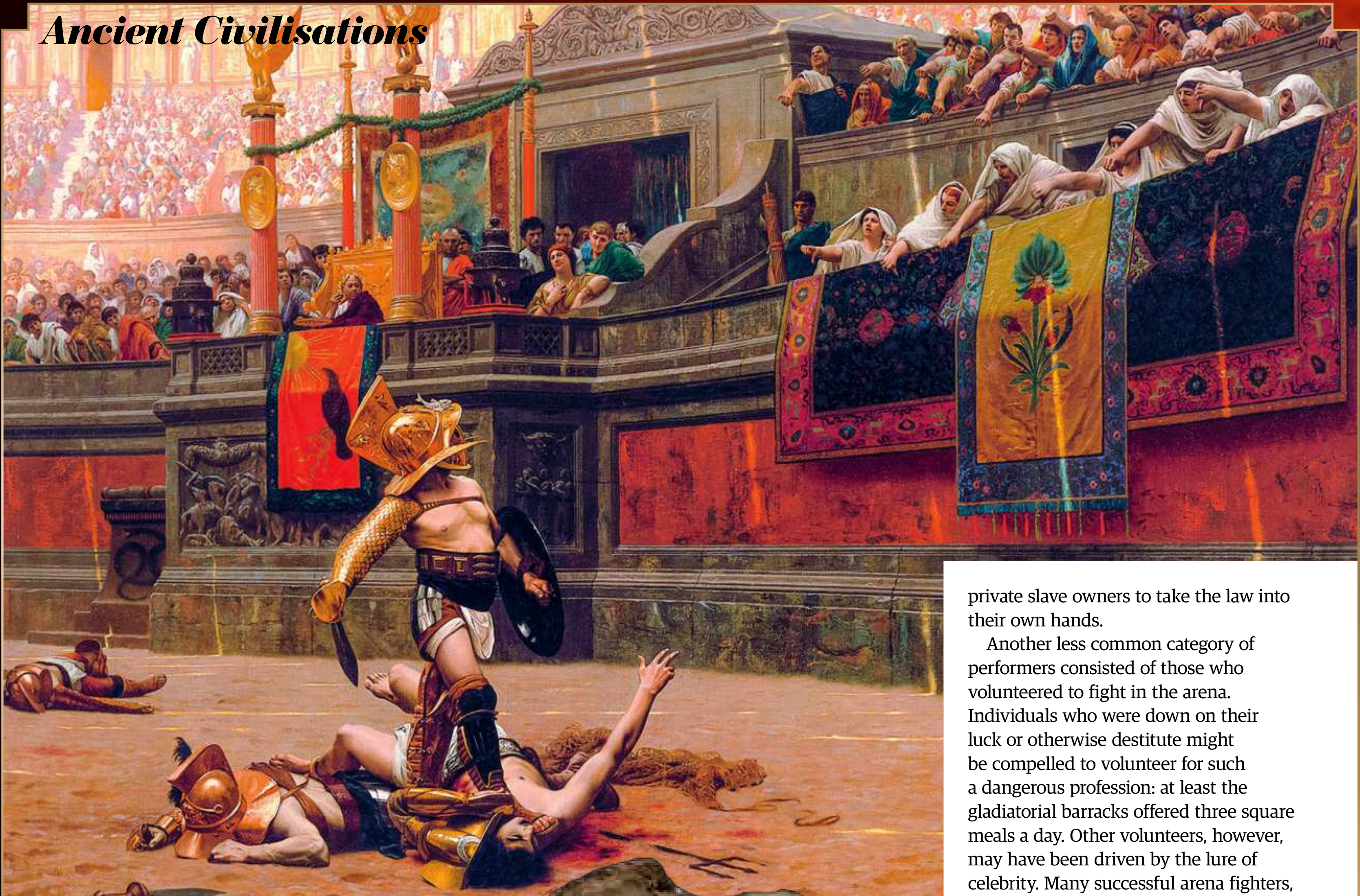
the pinnacle of amphitheatre design. The Colosseum measured 188 by 156 metres, holding some 50,000 spectators, while its arena measured approximately 77 by 47 metres – more than enough room for a variety of large-scale events. A final important element of the Colosseum's design was its basement substructures. In its final form, the Colosseum basement, or hypogeum, contained approximately 200 animal cages as well as ample space for various props and equipment that, along with the animals, could be raised to the arena floor in a matter of minutes by a series of ramps and lifts. There is some debate, however, as to whether or not these substructures were an original component of the Colosseum's design, or a later addition. Records of the events staged to inaugurate the Colosseum in 80 CE suggest that they included marine spectacles (naumachiae), which would have necessitated the flooding of the arena floor or some sort of basin set into it. If this supposition is correct, the arena substructures could not have been in place at that time.

Regardless of where it was staged the success of a given arena spectacle depended upon the skill of the participants. Both gladiators and venatores were trained in ludi across Roman territory before setting foot in an arena. It was not unheard of for performers to fight in more than one discipline over the course of their careers (such as at least one gladiator who also fought as a venator in the arena), but in most cases, novices would be assigned to trainers in one specific discipline soon after their entry into a familia. Gladiatorial recruits would not spar with other novices right away, but instead would practise their weapon skills on a wooden stake, known as a palus. The ranking system of gladiators was based upon this term for the training post: within each fighting discipline, a given gladiator would often be denoted as 'first stake' (primus palus), 'second stake', and so forth depending upon his martial skill. Organisers would usually pit combatants of equal rank against each other, but on occasion a novice gladiator might fight against a veteran, sometimes with unexpected results. Unsurprisingly, there appears to have been a considerable overlap between the training methods of the Roman army and the gladiatorial barracks: in the late 2nd century BCE gladiatorial trainers were enlisted to provide additional training to Roman legionaries.

Like athletes of today, trainees for the Roman arena also appear to have eaten a specialised diet, in addition to their physical training. Modern analysis of gladiator skeletons found at Ephesus in modern-day Turkey indicates that they ate a high-carbohydrate and high-calcium diet. According to a number of ancient sources, this dietary combination was achieved through the consumption of a large amount of


The retiarius gladiator type was armed with a trident and weighted net



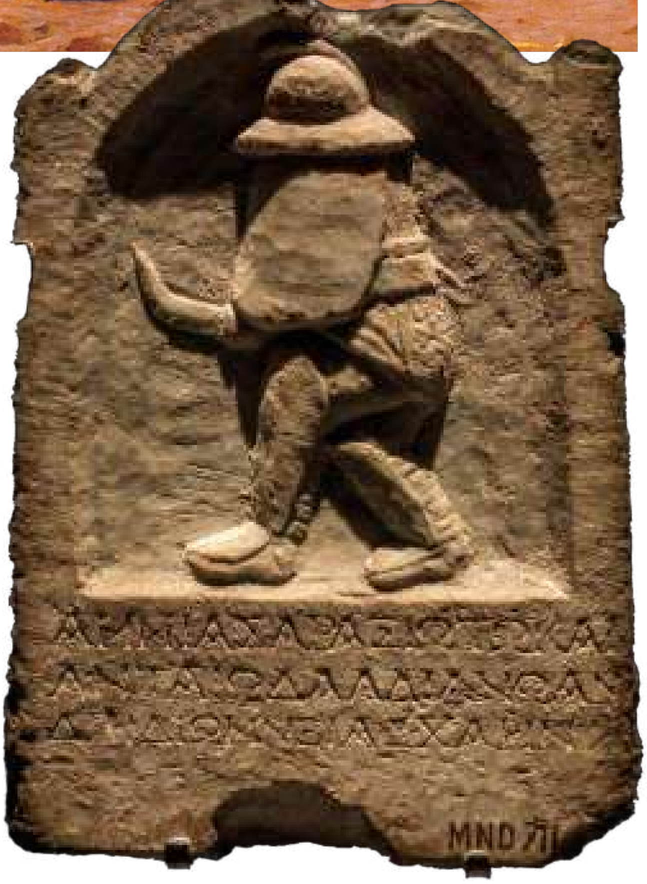
barley and vegetables, as well as bone ash and burnt wood. The unappetising ash and wood were eaten to offset the calcium deficiency that would otherwise have resulted from a typical gladiator's diet. The most common explanation for the high carbohydrate consumption is that it would have produced a layer of belly fat which, while not perhaps the most aesthetically pleasing, would have nonetheless provided an arena combatant with an additional layer of protection against slashes to the midsection.

As already mentioned, many gladiators under the Republic were originally prisoners of war who had been captured during Roman military campaigns. As Roman conquests dried up under the Empire, prisoners of war became a much less important source of gladiatorial recruits, but fighters were still overwhelmingly drawn from the lower classes of society. Criminals condemned to fight in the arena as either gladiators or venatores were a common source of arena recruits and, in the early Empire at least, unfortunate slaves were sometimes sold to gladiatorial familiae by their owners. The imperial government actually took steps to ban this practice, not wishing private slave owners to take the law into their own hands.

Another less common category of performers consisted of those who volunteered to fight in the arena. Individuals who were down on their luck or otherwise destitute might be compelled to volunteer for such a dangerous profession: at least the gladiatorial barracks offered three square meals a day. Other volunteers, however, may have been driven by the lure of celebrity. Many successful arena fighters, despite their often lowly backgrounds, achieved a considerable degree of fame among the public. One need only look at the preserved gladiatorial graffiti from Pompeii, as well as the extant epigrams written in honour of arena performers like the venator Carpophorus, to realise the celebrity status that such individuals could sometimes achieve.

Regardless of their origins, be it criminal, slave or volunteer, all gladiators were required to take an oath upon entering training that formalised their subjugation; and under Roman law, arena performers were labelled as infamis ('disreputable'), the same status conferred upon other professions considered immoral such as prostitutes and actors. The lowly status of gladiators and venatores seemingly allowed many spectators to enjoy the violent spectacles in which they fought without any qualms of conscience for the participants' suffering.

Contrary to the idea some might have of gladiatorial combats being a bloody free-for-all, the contests in the arena were fought according to a rigidly enforced set of rules. Gladiatorial duels were routinely overseen by officials known as the summa rudis ('first stick') and secunda rudis ('second stick'), so named for the long sticks that they wielded to punish rule infractions. The most



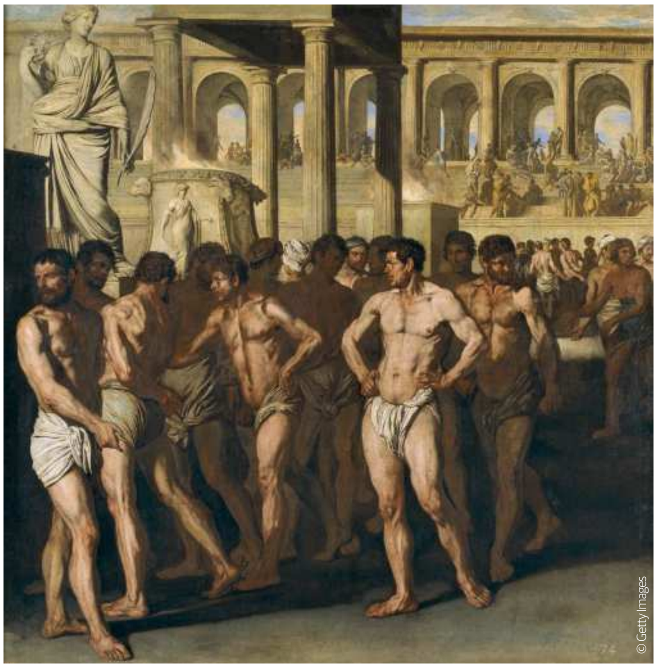
TOP A gladiator seeks a judgement from the crowd in this painting by Jean Léon Gérôme

ABOVE This 3rd century CE gladiator tombstone from modern-day Turkey displays the typical equipment of a Thracian gladiator, including his distinctive curved sword common outcome of a gladiatorial contest was a missio ('reprieve'), in which the defeated gladiator was spared to fight again another day (provided he didn't die of his injuries). Prior to such an outcome, the losing gladiator would usually lower his weapons as a sign of submission and await the spectacle organiser's decision as to whether his life would be spared by his victorious opponent. Most editores, to ensure even more popularity from their spectacle, would follow the wishes of the audience members under such circumstances, who signalled their opinion with a simple 'thumbs-up' or a 'thumbs down' gesture.

It was not unheard of for gladiators to fight to the death, but such instances were quite rare. In fact it has been estimated, based upon the available evidence, that only about ten percent of the gladiators participating in a given spectacle actually died. Gladiators represented a costly investment to both their owners and the editores who rented their services, and neither party wanted them to be slaughtered indiscriminately in the arena.

It was the increasing expense and difficulty in procuring arena performers that certainly played a major role in the gradual disappearance of the munera from the Roman Empire. In the case of gladiatorial combat, the influence of Christianity is often cited as the reason for its abolishment, but this theory is an oversimplification. Amid the disorder and economic decline that was suffered by the Roman state in the 3rd century CE, gladiatorial munera had already begun to disappear from the frontier provinces of the Empire because local organisers no longer had the funds to stage them on a regular basis. Similarly, the major issue for the staging of venationes in the 5th century was the dramatically decreased access to exotic animals for the arena as territories like north Africa fell from Roman control.

> "CRIMINALS CONDEMNED TO FIGHT IN THE ARENA AS EITHER GLADIATORS OR VENATORES WERE A COMMON SOURCE OF RECRUITS"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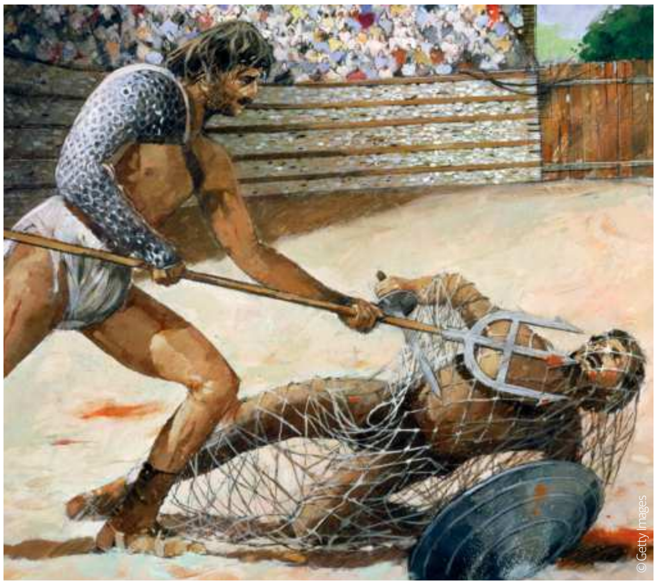
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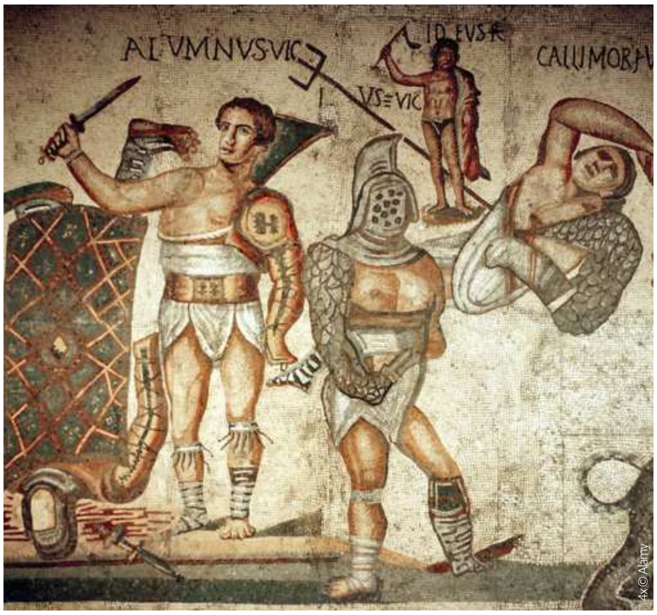
TOP A group of gladiators in more relaxed setting outside of the arena

ABOVE A depiction of gladiatorial combat taking place in Silchester, Britannia

BELOW A section of the Borghese mosaic, which depicts a range of gladiators



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A GESTURE OF DEATH

What did the 'thumbs up' and 'thumbs down' signal mean?

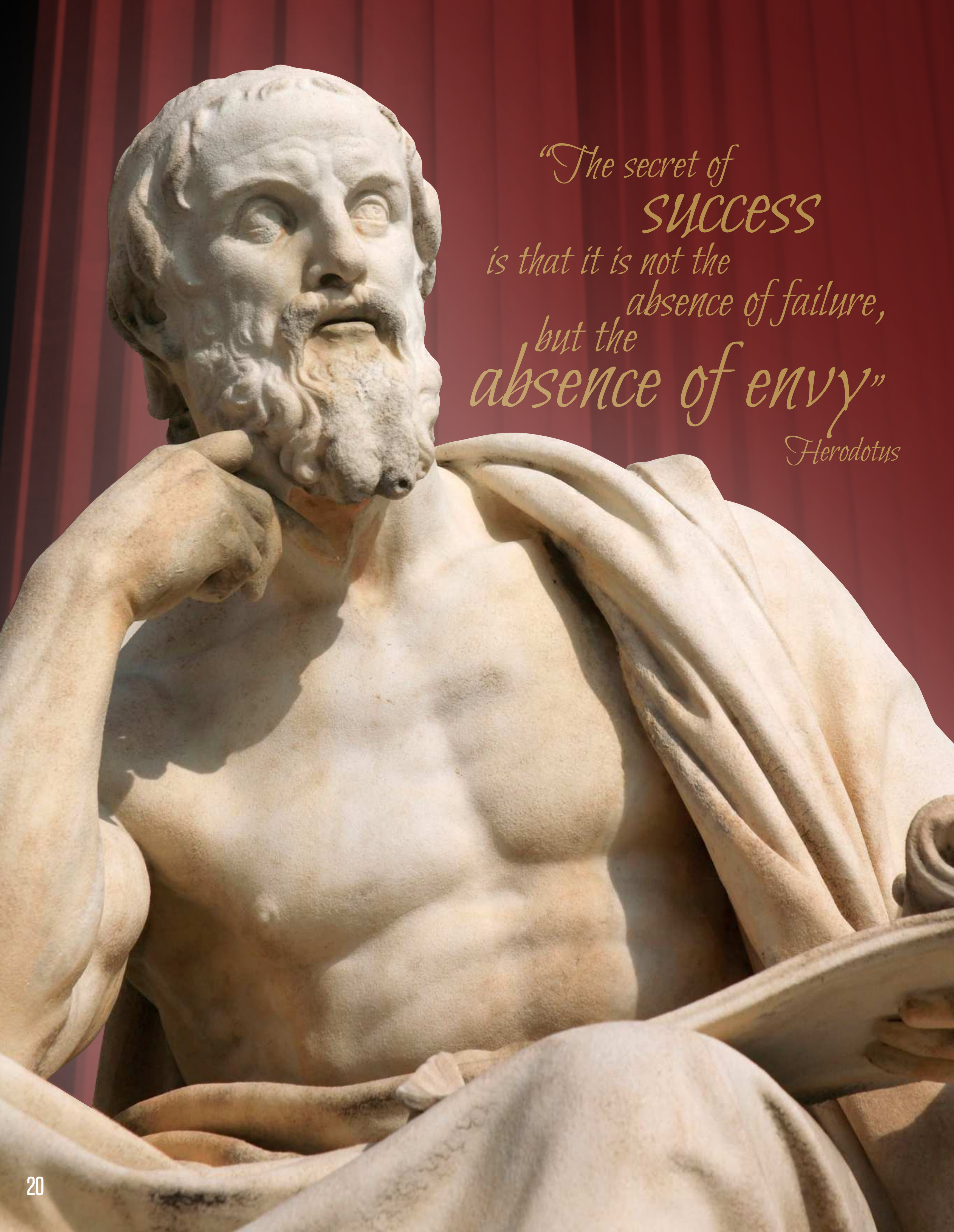
It's a common scene in many depictions of gladiatorial combat: the moment when the defeated gladiator awaits the decision of the emperor as to whether he will live to fight another day or be slaughtered on the spot. It was a moment of high drama, not to mention the point when the thousands of spectators supposedly had a say in the fate of the defeated man. This no doubt helps to explain the popularity of this scene in so much of the art and fiction about gladiators.

But what was the truth of this moment? For a start, it wasn't necessarily up to the emperor to make these decisions. This decision belonged to the 'editores', or organisers, who might sometimes be an emperor, but not always. They would have the final call on death or mercy.

The other key question is was it a 'thumbs up' or a 'thumbs down' that indicated that the fallen gladiator should die? There has been much debate on this question and the hunt for definitive evidence continues. The Latin terms used to describe the gestures are a little ambiguous, such as 'hostile thumb' or 'press your thumbs', which according to Pliny the Elder was used to show mercy to a gladiator.

One suggestion made by American Classics professor Anthony Corbeill is that the phrase 'pressing the thumb' referred to a 'thumbs down' gesture pressing onto a closed fist. This could perhaps be imitating the sheathing of a sword to indicate mercy, with raising a thumb indicating the opposite.

What seems clear is that the Romans didn't think about these hand gestures the way we do today.



> "The secret of
> success
> is that it is not the
> absence of failure,
> but the
> absence of envy"
>
> Herodotus

CAN WE TRUST HERODOTUS?

Often considered to be the 'Father of History', many questions remain around the Greek writer's life and work

Written by Marc DeSantis

The ancient Greek historian Herodotus was born around 484 BCE. He was a native of the city of Halicarnassus (modern-day Bodrum) in Caria, a region in southwestern Asia Minor. While little is known about his life, his origins are worth examining for a better understanding of the man and his times.

Halicarnassus was originally Dorian Greek, but by Herodotus' day it had acquired an Ionian Greek culture, something it shared with the rich and powerful Ionian city state of Athens, which was then in the midst of its glorious fifth century BCE 'Golden Age'.

Halicarnassus' link with Athens was political too. Though Queen Artemisia I of Halicarnassus had fought alongside the Persians in their attempted conquest of Greece (she had commanded a war galley at Salamis) Halicarnassus would later become a member of both the anti-Persian, Athenian-led League of Delos as well as the more tightly bound successor to it, the so-called Athenian Empire.

LEFT The ruins of a temple to Athena in Herodotus' home of Halicarnassus

A Greek heritage is likely not the whole story behind the ever-inquisitive Herodotus. Caria itself, surrounding Halicarnassus, was non-Greek, and Herodotus may very well have had some Carian ancestry. Christopher Baron, professor of classics at the University of Notre Dame, says that if this was the case, "perhaps this mixed heritage was one of the things that inspired his curiosity about the world."

It would be Herodotus' chief contribution to Western civilisation to produce what is said to be the first proper historical narrative ever written, the *Histories*. He showed an insatiable curiosity to learn about the world around him, and he reported on subjects as varied as the Ionian Revolt and the nomadic Scythian horsemen of the steppes of Eurasia.

The Athenians were so taken with the *Histories* - it is said that Herodotus read it aloud both in Athens and at Olympia - that they gave him three

▶

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talents (some 320kg) of silver. It was sufficiently well-known in Athens that it was even parodied in 425 BCE by the Athenian playwright Aristophanes in *The Acharnians*.

Herodotus would later make his home at Thurii, a Greek city in southern Italy, and would die there at some time in the 420's BCE

WHY DID HERODOTUS WRITE HIS HISTORIES?

At the very outset of his nine-book *Histories*, Herodotus declares his purpose. He writes that he has undertaken his historia (inquiry) "so that human achievements may not become forgotten in time". In addition, he says that he wants to explain why the Greeks and the Persians went to war with one another. While the massive Persian attack on Greece between 490-479 BCE is indeed his primary subject, he takes his time getting to it, covering many other topics along the way.

The word Herodotus used to describe his work, 'historia', ultimately came to hold the meaning of history as we understand it today. According to Baron, Herodotus, "investigates the causes of past events and offers a narrative of them." However, Baron also points out: "Herodotus was interested in much more than just political and military narrative. He gives lengthy descriptions of the social and religious customs of other peoples ('ethnography'), of man-made 'wonders' (the walls of Babylon, the Pyramids in Egypt), and of the natural world (the causes of the annual flooding of the Nile)."

Brian Fagan, professor of anthropology at the University of California, Santa Barbara, shares this view of Herodotus' wide-ranging interests. In his book *From Stonehenge to Samarkand*, he writes that the *Histories* are, "a mosaic of historical narrative and dozens of well-told stories." Herodotus is, "our tour guide and proxy observer," along the way in a work that is, "part travelogue, part history and myth, and part sheer gossipy storytelling."

Herodotus never claims that he witnessed firsthand any of the great events that he writes about, so all of his information must have been derived from what he learned subsequently. His journeys took him across the known world, and he clearly asked the local people he encountered many questions wherever he went. This is how he obtained the various accounts that he would include in his *Histories*.

CAN HERODOTUS BE TRUSTED?

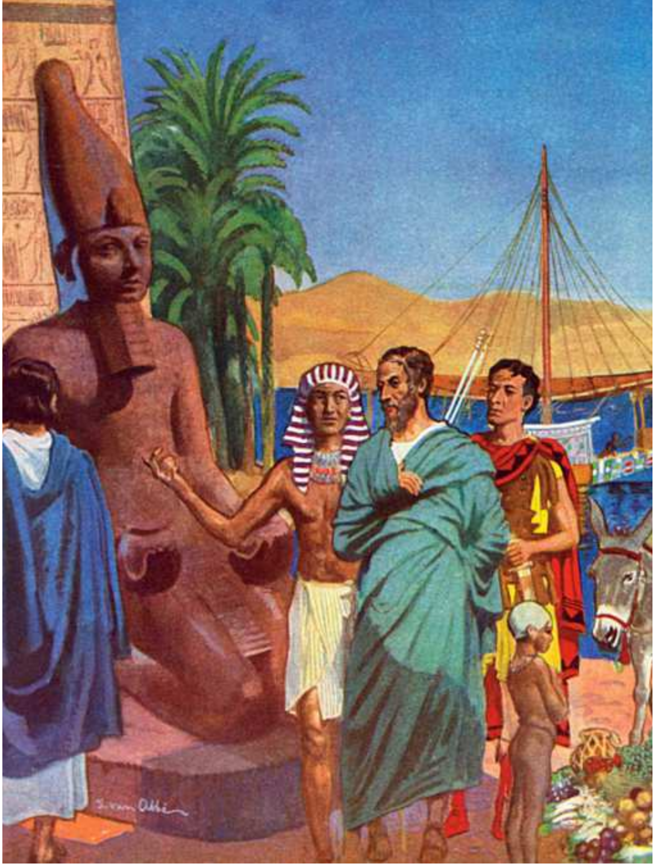
Everyone, it seems, can acquire critics, and Herodotus is no exception. A chief accusation levelled against him is that his reporting is not to be trusted. So how reliable is Herodotus? His methods certainly differed immensely from those practised by historians today, but this is only to be expected given his pioneering role in creating the discipline of history itself. Importantly, he was impartial in his collection of facts and stories and made great efforts to acquire them from disparate sources.

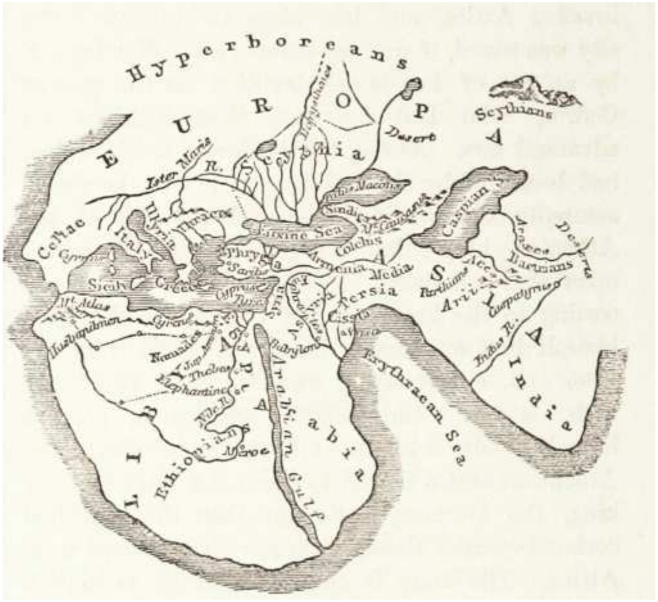
The question is an old one, in any case, and his reliability, or lack thereof, has exercised commentators for centuries. Dissatisfaction with his work had emerged in ancient times. As far back as the first century BCE, the geographer Strabo complained that there is, "much nonsense in Herodotus." And while the first century BCE Roman politician and orator Marcus Tullius Cicero may have famously dubbed Herodotus the, "Father of History," Cicero also said that there were many tall tales in his work.

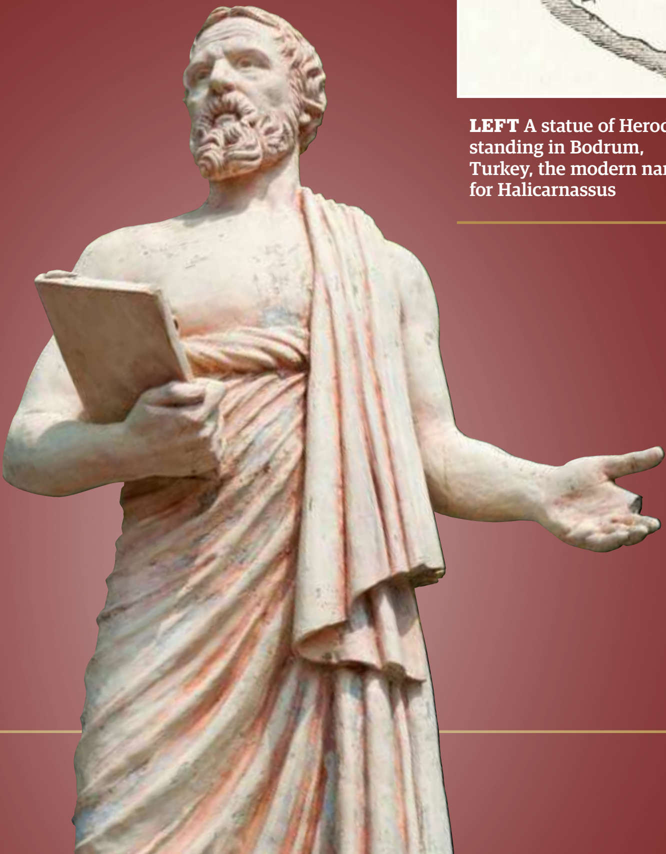
Later, Plutarch, a Greek historian living in the Roman Empire and writing in the first and second centuries CE, actually went so far as to compose a critical piece entitled *On the Malice of Herodotus*. Plutarch was annoyed that his favoured city of Thebes had come out so poorly in the *Histories*.

It is undeniable that there are inaccuracies in the *Histories*. As Baron points out: "There are plenty of things in Herodotus that we can say pretty certainly are not true, and there are many stories which today we would classify as 'legendary' or mythical." However, this does not make Herodotus a liar. Baron says that, "the notion that Herodotus deliberately told lies is based on a misunderstanding of his approach and objectives. He was interested in the truth, but he also recognised how complicated it could be."

Herodotus did not see it as his place to judge what he had discovered. Instead, he placed the material before his readers, sometimes in several







LEFT A statue of Herodotus standing in Bodrum, Turkey, the modern name for Halicarnassus

TOP Much of the *Histories* came from his travels across the Mediterranean region

ABOVE A map of the world according to Herodotus competing versions, and left it to them to decide for themselves to either believe or disbelieve. Herodotus himself said: "I am obliged to record the things I am told, but I am certainly not required to believe them." Herodotus' basic honesty, both with himself and with his audience, was to accurately record what he saw and what he was told.

He was also tough and evenhanded in his approach. As Barry Strauss, professor of history and classics at Cornell University, New York, writes in *The Battle of Salamis*: "Herodotus shone on everyone he met the harsh light of a mind without illusions."

HERODOTUS' PLACE IN HISTORY

Many modern readers can find Herodotus off-putting because his work can sometimes seem to meander. "Reading Herodotus requires patience," counsels Baron. "Some readers feel like Herodotus takes too long to 'get to the point'. But most scholars today would agree that those frequent digressions do have a point, in that all that background information helps explain what happened (in addition to being highly entertaining)."

When Herodotus does get around to the meat of his narrative, the Greek and Persian Wars, his account does not fail to fascinate and much of it is immensely dramatic. From the running of the Athenian hoplites at Marathon in 490 BCE to the doomed last stand of the valiant Spartan hoplites at Thermopylae in 480 BCE, Herodotus delivers on the initial promise he made at the beginning of the *Histories*: to record human achievements so that they would not be forgotten. Indeed, they are still remembered today in large part because of his work.

The *Histories* are filled with arresting moments and vignettes. There is the story of the slave sent with a secret message tattooed on his scalp (his hair then allowed to grow back over it to hide it) to advise the Ionian Greeks to rebel against the Persian Empire. And there is the scene right before the decisive naval battle at Salamis in 480 BCE, in which the canny Themistocles threatens to have his Athenians pack up and leave Greece altogether for a new home in Italy if the other Greeks don't agree to stay and fight.

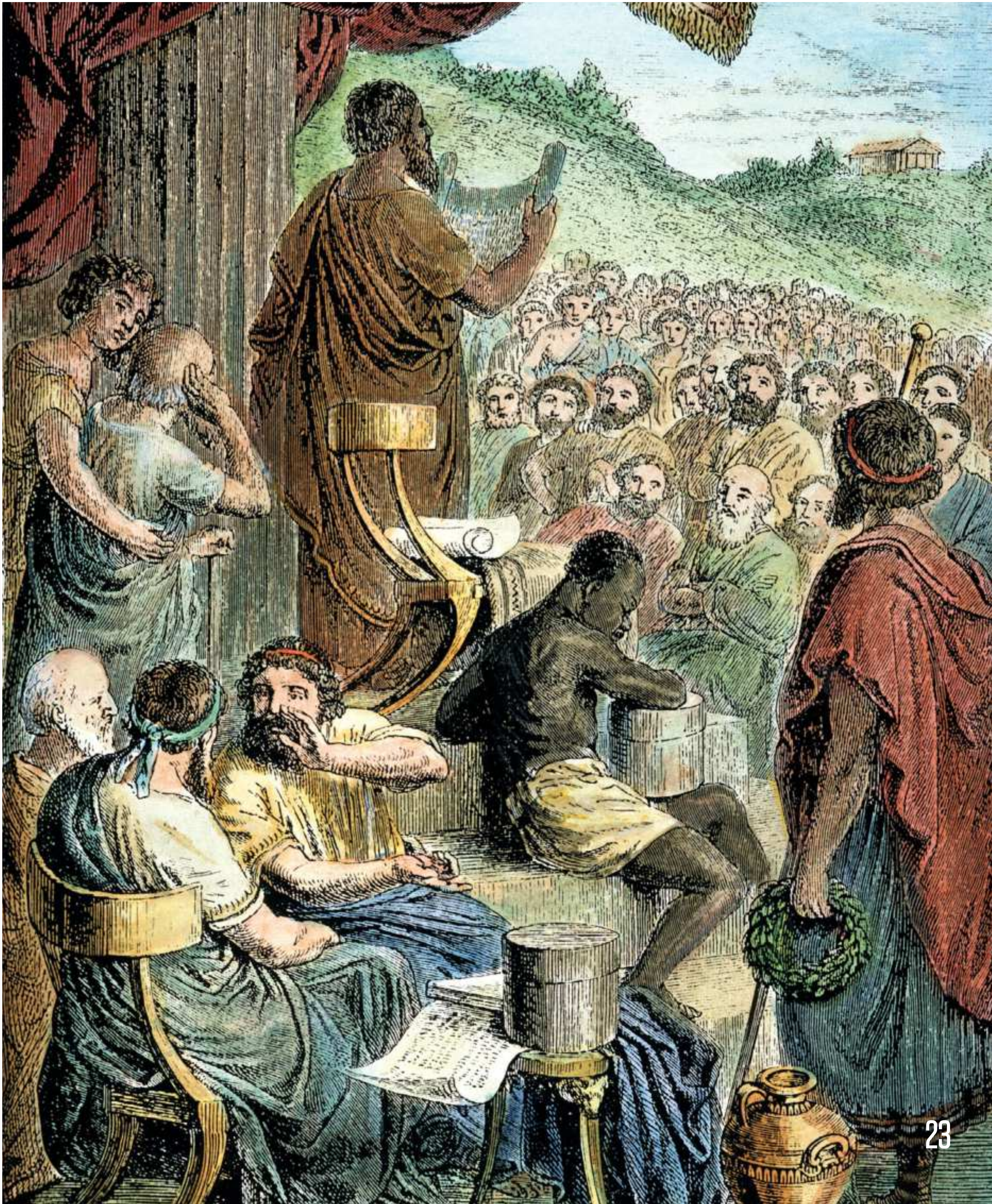
Does Herodotus deserve the acclaim he receives as being the first of all historians? Baron says yes: "Much of this material would not usually be considered 'history' now. But it's also important to remember that there was no genre called 'history' before Herodotus wrote. I think that in setting himself the basic task of explaining and remembering past events, he can fairly be considered the first historian."

Herodotus also provided a model for subsequent Greek and Roman historians, who employed the same encompassing vision of history that he pioneered. They would have no qualms about including information about peoples and geography in their work, just as Herodotus did in the *Histories*.

Baron believes that Herodotus is also very much relevant today in the 21st century: "Herodotus' open-mindedness can still serve as an example for historians (and everyone) today in two ways: his broad view of what 'history' should contain and his willingness to evaluate foreign cultures on their own terms." ○

> "In peace, sons bury their fathers. In war, fathers bury their sons"
> Herodotus

BELOW Herodotus reads his *Histories* to a large crowd of Greeks



LIVIA DRUSILLA

FIRST ROMAN EMPRESS

Written by Katharine Marsh

How one woman shaped a blueprint and legacy that would last for millennia

If you stroll through the halls of the Museo Pio Clementino in Vatican City, you'll be surrounded by men. The marble busts boast strong Roman noses, and the full-length statues show the grandeur of Ancient Rome's elite ruling class. They're men – emperors, senators, consuls – who helped shape the republic and empire, creating the legacy we know today. But not all of them are men.

One of the white marble statues is a woman, portrayed with her hands up. Her hair is covered, and her stola covers her body. Most importantly, there's a reason her likeness is here. This is Livia Drusilla, and she has as much of a right to be there as her neighbours.

Livia's beginnings perhaps don't suggest what she was destined for. She was born in 58 or 59 BCE to a wealthy family; so wealthy that she married Tiberius Claudius Nero (remember those names for later), a member of the well-to-do Claudian clan. But in the dying days of the Roman Republic, Tiberius Nero chose his allies poorly, siding with the optimates opposite Julius Caesar, and then supporting Mark Antony when he fought at Philippi. Exile followed, and Livia went with him and their son, Tiberius, to Greece in 39 BCE.

Just one or two years later, Livia fell pregnant again, but her husband never got to see the newborn. The 30s were a tumultuous time in the Mediterranean; the Republic was in its final days, with a young upstart, Octavian, vying for control. A member of the Julian clan and the adopted son of Julius Caesar, he was a strong contender for leader of Rome. And he ▶

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> “She was sometimes referred to as mater patriae, or mother of the nation”

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ABOVE Just one of the vineyards from which we now get Prosecco, an early version of which was a favourite of Livia’s

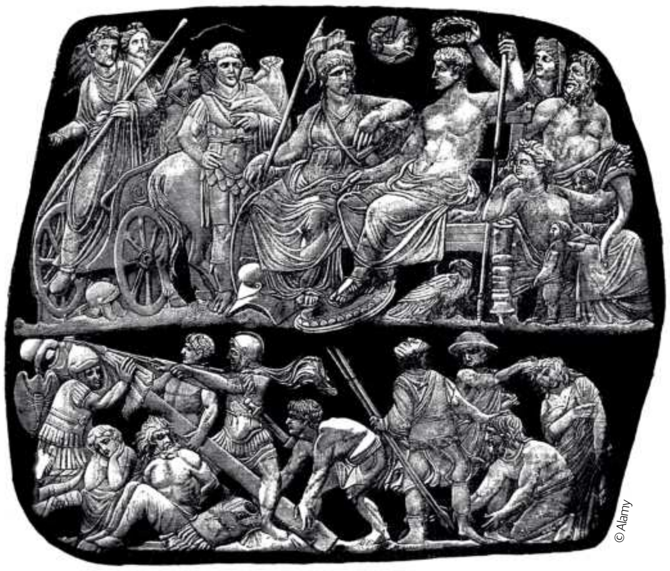
was recently divorced; his second wife, Scribonia, who had given him a daughter, had become tiresome to him.

Octavian’s sights were set on Livia. She was beautiful, dignified and intelligent, and embodied the republican ideals of what a woman should be. It didn’t hurt that she was now associated with the Claudians, either. But while she didn’t have the privilege of providing her second husband with a son, it didn’t matter. Livia already had a son, and now she could make him emperor.

To do that, she needed power, and that wasn’t something Roman women enjoyed very often. Women were to be modest, quiet, dutiful and loyal, and were given few rights. There was no voting or standing for office, and hardly any would manage to run their own businesses. But in wealthy families, some women held another power: they had their husbands’ ears. And Livia made sure the emperor trusted her completely.

Of course, we know little about Augustus and Livia’s private life, but we do know that Livia enjoyed a level of freedom that not many women at the time shared. Strict moral and marriage laws had to be followed, but Livia was able to circumvent these with no repercussions. At gladiator matches and other entertainment events, she was able to sit at the front with the Vestal Virgins, the only other women who weren’t relegated to the back of stadiums. She was also able to go out and about on her own - a rarity in the late Republic - and she enjoyed a certain amount of financial freedom.

Her step-grandson called her ‘Ulixes stolatus’ (‘Ulysses [Odysseus] in a frock’) for her sharp tongue, and she would have open and frank conversations with the emperor about politics and how he should approach his opponents. There were many in Augustus’ inner circle who knew Livia had a certain amount of influence over him; she wasn’t one to be crossed.



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BELOW Augustus and Livia saw in the period known as the Pax Romana

LIVIA’S ELIXIR OF LIFE

Keep calm and drink Prosecco

The rolling hills of the Veneto and Friuli Venezia Giulia regions in northern Italy have been home to winemakers for centuries. Although the name ‘Prosecco’ didn’t necessarily exist before the 16th century, ‘castellum nobile vinum Pucinum’ did. But it wasn’t just known as a fashionable drink.

In Ancient Rome, prosecco was a delicacy, and enjoyed by the upper classes. More than that though, it was thought to have been medicinal. Seen by some as an elixir that allowed the drinker to live a long life, a lengthy list of Romans drank it.

Among them was Livia, who actually credited it for allowing her to live well into her 80s. She enjoyed a glass a day for most of her adult life. Pliny the Elder was another who swore by it, and who knows how far past 55 he would have lived had he not been killed by his curiosity of Mount Vesuvius in 79 CE.

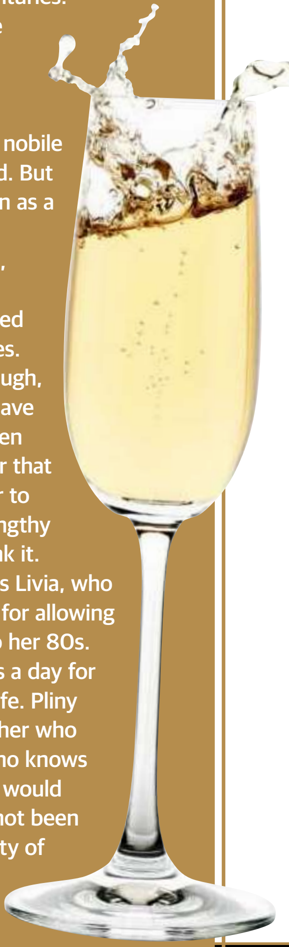


Image source: wiki/MM

LEFT The imperial family as they appear on the Ara Pacis

RIGHT A bronze statue of Livia as a priestesses from Herculaneum

© Alamy

But it was all well and good Livia earning her husband's trust and affections behind closed doors; they needed to prove to the public that they were the perfect Roman power couple. Livia was the first wife of an emperor (or princeps, first among equals – perhaps at that time 'emperor' would have smacked a little too much of the dreaded Roman monarchy). She was the first first lady of Rome, if you will. There was no precedent here to follow, no blueprint from women gone by. This was the first time a Roman had held absolute power in about 500 years; it was new territory.

Livia was presented as the perfect Roman matrona. She always dressed modestly, and spun the cloth for hers and her husband's tunics herself. She kept a conservative hairstyle, and wore little jewellery. Everything about her could be traced back to the old Roman values of marriage, family and morality. She didn't appear on too many coins either – Augustus was the one in power, after all.

But she was still princeps Romana, the first lady of Rome. Statues of her would be created, and she commissioned and dedicated public buildings to gain favour. She appears (we think) on the Ara Pacis, or Altar of Peace, both as herself and as a possible model for the goddess of fertility. Perhaps of more significance is that the altar was dedicated on 30 January 9 BCE: her birthday. A major portico – the Porticus Liviae – was dedicated to her two years later, and Strabo claims in *Geography* that she was one of the major contributors to the beautification of Rome alongside her husband, his sister Octavia, and the general Agrippa.

Livia was established in her role; she was treated with respect held a certain amount of influence in the burgeoning empire – so much so that she was sometimes referred to as mater patriae, or mother of the nation. But if she wanted to truly cement her legacy, she needed the throne to pass to her son, which would be far from easy.

While Augustus had no sons of his own, it didn't necessarily matter in Ancient Rome. Augustus himself wasn't Julius Caesar's son – instead, he was adopted. The emperor could adopt any man or boy to be his heir, and there was no guarantee it would be Tiberius. Especially because Augustus' daughter, Julia, had three sons: Gais, Lucius and Agrippa Postumus. The real kicker? Their father was Marcus Agrippa, one of the emperor's friends and commanders. Gaius and Lucius were adopted by Augustus around 17 BCE (their younger brother was yet to be born).

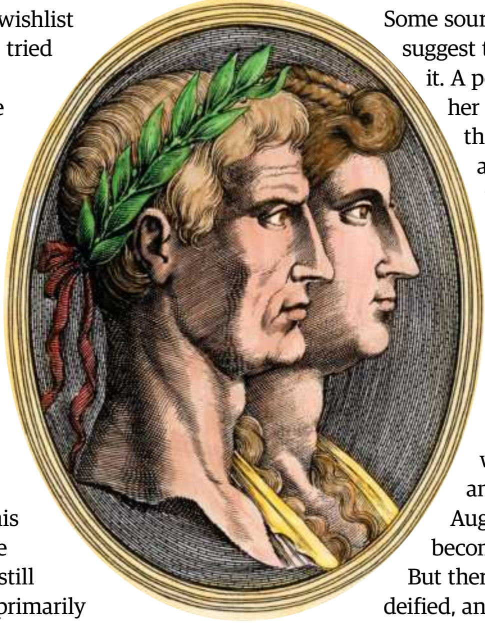
However, all three boys would meet an untimely death. Some have questioned whether the empress had anything to do with their demises, but it's incredibly unlikely. Gaius was slain on the battlefield in 4 CE at the age of 23, while the middle brother, Lucius, would never live to see his 20s. Illness took him in 2 CE while he was in Gaul. Agrippa Postumus lived the longest of the brothers. While he was exiled at a young age, he would ultimately be executed after Augustus' death. As far as Livia was concerned, he wasn't a threat.

By all accounts, Tiberius was brought up as an heir. Born in 42 BCE, he was significantly older than his rivals, and given responsibilities as a result. In 6 BCE, he was given the power of a tribune, and was married to Augustus' daughter. Today we'd consider the relationship questionable, but in the early days of the empire it was a sign of Tiberius' power – and in 4 BCE, it was his time to be adopted by Augustus.

This isn't to say that Augustus was happy about the situation, though. Tiberius would later claim that ▶

Augustus never really treated him well; the others were higher on his wishlist for a successor. When Tiberius tried to exile himself to Rhodes to escape the imperial family, the emperor declared it desertion. But Livia wanted her son to become princeps, and would eventually bring him back into the fold.

Through all of this, Livia's marriage was going strong – or as strong as can be expected. Augustus was notoriously unfaithful, but they remained a power couple, a dynamic duo. However, in the 10s CE, the emperor's health was failing; his time was coming to a close. He became more withdrawn, but still communicated with his wife, primarily through letters. When the end came in 14 CE, Livia was by his bedside in Nola, near the infamous Mount Vesuvius that would decimate the area 65 years later.



ABOVE Joint profile of Livia and Augustus

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But how did Augustus actually die? Some sources, both ancient and modern, suggest that his loving wife was behind it. A poisoned fig was apparently her weapon of choice. Some also think that she delayed the death announcement because Tiberius wasn't in Rome at the time; the death wasn't announced until the new emperor arrived at the house.

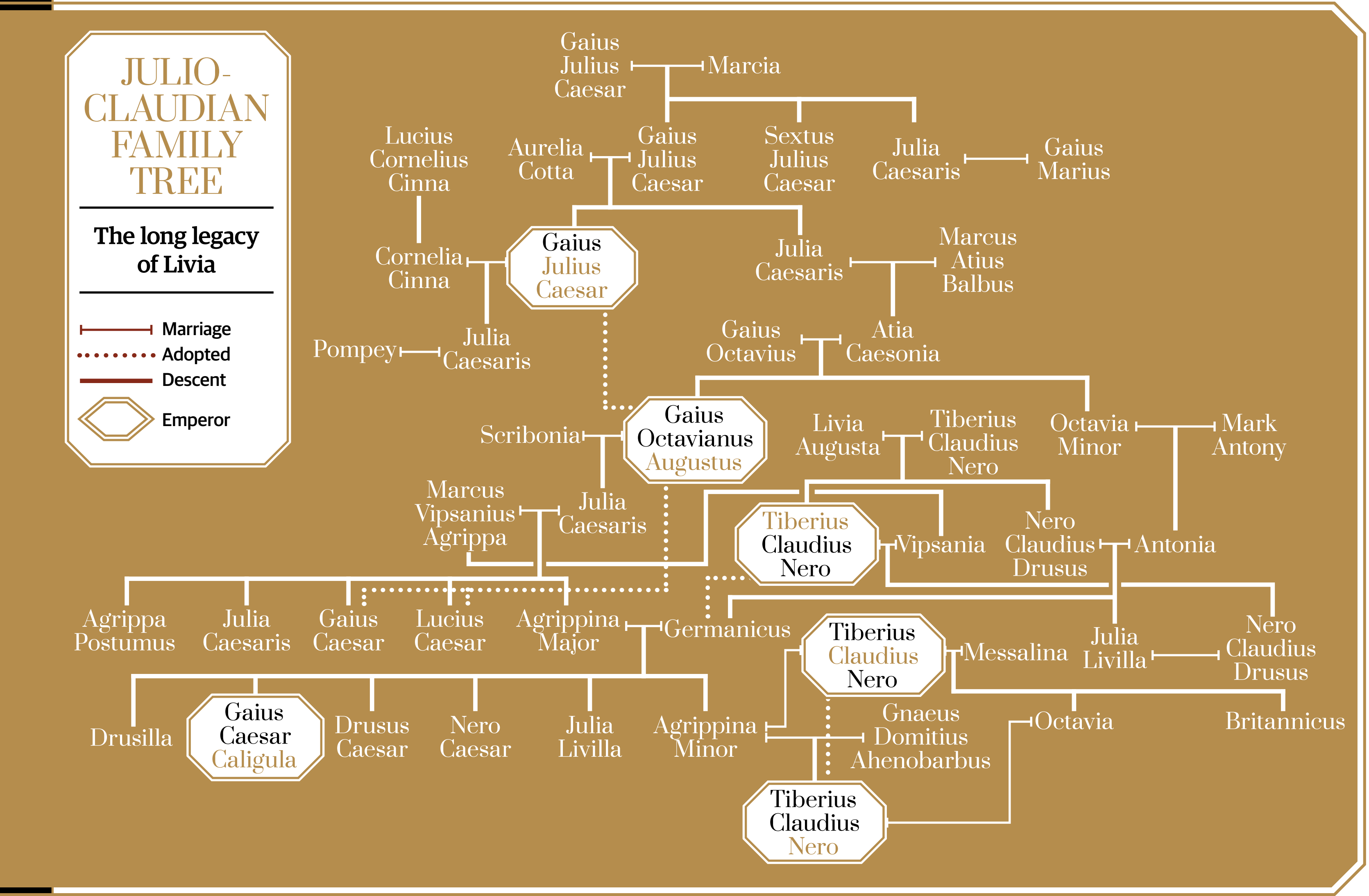
While Augustus may have been dead, Livia's prestige didn't die alongside him. In the first emperor's will, he had adopted his wife (again, this wasn't too strange for the time), and she was given the name Julia Augusta. 'Augusta' would go on to become a honorific for empresses.

But there was more – Augustus was deified, and Livia became a priestess of his cult. The one-third of his estate that she inherited was a nice bonus, too.

Perhaps most importantly, she was now the mother of the most important man in the Mediterranean. Letters to the emperor were addressed to her as well, and she signed letters that Tiberius sent. In 20 CE, it became treasonous to speak out against her. When she recovered from a grave illness in 22 CE, thanksgiving offerings were made by the people.

Livia wasn't one to let go of power. As time wore on, she became the ultimate overbearing mother. She interfered in her son's court, showing favour to politicians who Tiberius didn't necessarily like. She interfered in trials too, with Plancina, the wife and accused poisoner of Calpurnius Piso, being pardoned "by the request of [Tiberius'] mother".

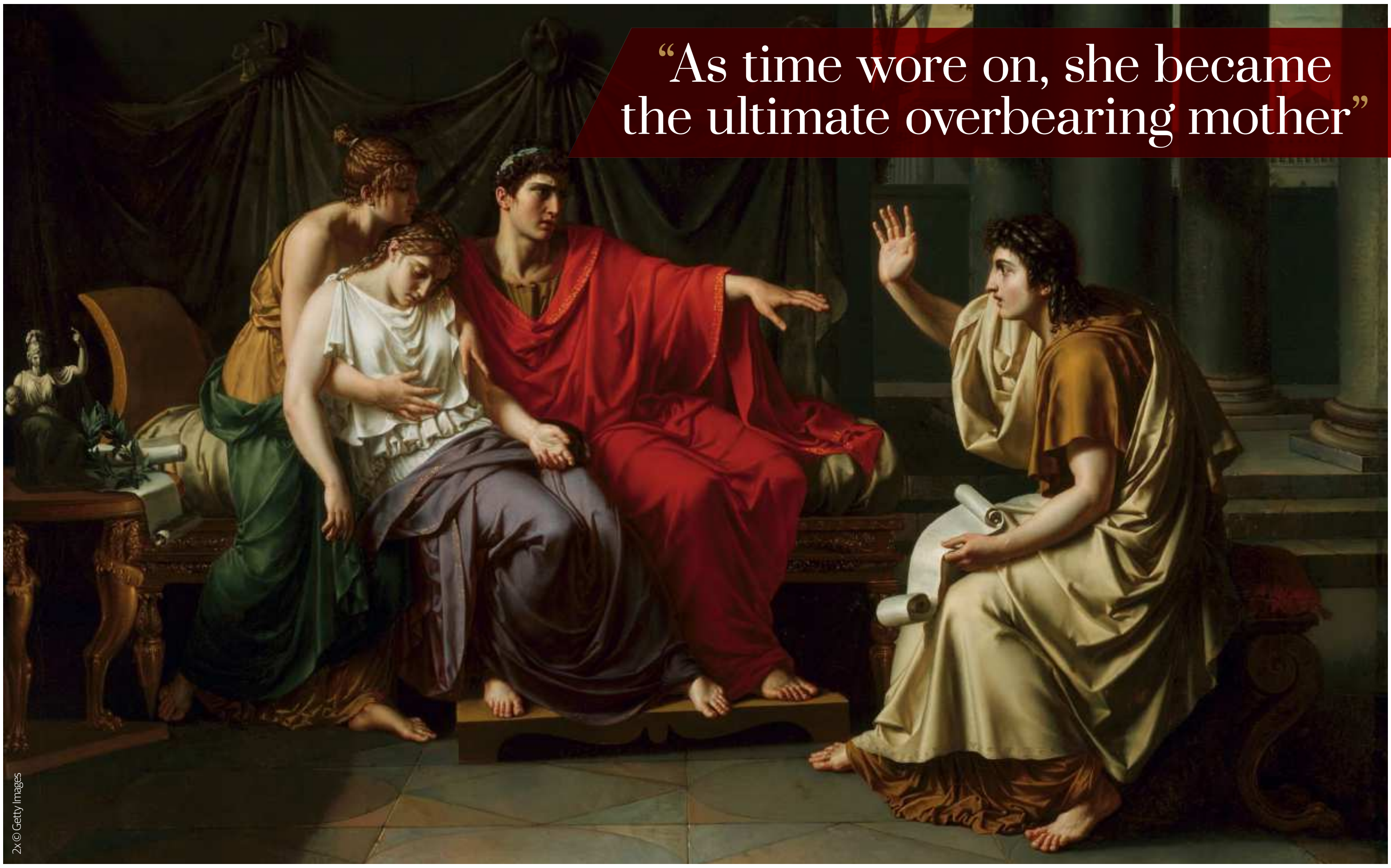
But Tiberius wasn't his adoptive father; he didn't take kindly to this woman meddling and having influence above her station. This was where her narrative played directly into the hands of historians portraying her as a meddlesome and wicked woman. It seemed that Tiberius was beginning to resent Livia's presence in Rome. As far as he was concerned, she wasn't a mater patriae, and she shouldn't



JULIO-CLAUDIAN FAMILY TREE

The long legacy of Livia

Marriage
Adopted
Descent
Emperor
Gaius Julius Caesar
Marcia
Lucius Cornelius Cinna
Aurelia Cotta
Gaius Julius Caesar
Sextus Julius Caesar
Julia Caesaris
Gaius Marius
Cornelia Cinna
Gaius Julius Caesar
Julia Caesaris
Marcus Atius Balbus
Pompey
Julia Caesaris
Gaius Octavius
Atia Caesonia
Scribonia
Gaius Octavianus Augustus
Livia Augusta
Tiberius Claudius Nero
Octavia Minor
Mark Antony
Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa
Julia Caesaris
Tiberius Claudius Nero
Vipsania
Nero Claudius Drusus
Antonia
Agrippa Postumus
Julia Caesaris
Gaius Caesar
Lucius Caesar
Agrippina Major
Germanicus
Tiberius Claudius Nero
Messalina
Julia Livilla
Nero Claudius Drusus
Drusilla
Gaius Caesar Caligula
Drusus Caesar
Nero Caesar
Julia Livilla
Agrippina Minor
Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus
Octavia
Britannicus
Tiberius Claudius Nero



“As time wore on, she became the ultimate overbearing mother”

2x © Getty Images

be having honours bestowed on her left, right and centre. Worst of all, he was the emperor of Rome; he didn't want the annals to merely call him 'son of Livia', despite the petty irony of most simply referring to Livia as 'wife of Augustus' over the centuries.

Livia's ambition had earned Tiberius his position, and there's every reason to believe that it embarrassed him. He wanted distance between them, so in 26 CE, he fled to the island of Capri. What he got up to there is a source of some debate, but we know that he only saw his mother once or twice more before her death.

Livia would live for another three years after her son's departure. In 29 CE, at the age of 86, she breathed her last. Tiberius wouldn't attend her funeral, but whether she knew it or not, her legacy was secured. A dynasty was made from her blood that would last until 68 CE with the suicide of Nero. Remember her first husband, Tiberius Claudius Nero? His names would be lent to three of the Julio-Claudian leaders, all thanks to his wife.

It would be Claudius who would turn her into a goddess in 42 CE. It was a first in Ancient Rome: here was a woman who had risen to become so powerful that she was deified. She was loved. She was the wife, mother and grandmother of emperors by that point (she would later became the great-grandmother of an emperor, too). She had done everything to bring power to herself and her son, despite how Tiberius felt about it.

By today's standards, Livia was a feminist icon. In a patriarchal society, she found her way to the top and stayed there. She lived out her entire natural life without being assassinated (something that can't be said for many high-profile Roman men), and wielded control in her household and, to a certain extent, the empire. But that's not how history has remembered her.

Until relatively recently, women haven't been able to hold much power, simply because it has been thought that they shouldn't. As a result, depictions of Rome's first-ever, trendsetting empress have shown her as conniving, scheming and wicked. While she was revered for her pietas and morality, she was put down for her enjoyment of almost equal rights. Her influence exceeded what was appropriate for her gender in the eyes of many chroniclers over the centuries.

But the truth of the matter is that she was an icon. She paved the way for every empress of Ancient Rome, every first lady of the United States. With absolutely no precedent before her, she set the blueprint for behaviour, public image, and for those who married emperors after her. While Augustus may have found a city of bricks and left one of marble, Livia left a dynasty, the first Roman imperial house, and the defining role of the first lady for millennia to come. ○

ABOVE Virgil reads the *Aeneid* to Augustus, Octavia, and Livia

BELOW An imperial Roman cameo of Livia with her son Tiberius when he was a child

GREEK GODS

Uncover the origins of the Olympian deities and how they shaped Ancient Greek culture

Written by Annette Giesecke

According to Herodotus it was the poets Homer and Hesiod, writing in the 8th century BCE, who gave the Greeks their gods. Herodotus, who lived in the 5th century BCE, was himself a Greek from the city of Halicarnassus in what is now Turkey. He was right about Homer and Hesiod, or more properly, the works attributed to them. Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, together with Hesiod's *Theogony*, are the oldest existing works of literature in the Western world. In both of these book-length poems, all the major gods appear as characters with distinct personalities and powers. In his *Theogony*, which translates as '*Origin of the Gods*', Hesiod explains how exactly the Greek gods came into being. Hesiod's divine-creation myth is also a cosmogony, a story of the origins of Nature and the Universe. The first gods were elemental. They were deified physical parts of the Universe, but they gradually became anthropomorphised, believed – at least sometimes – to have human emotions and form. Zeus, Hera, Aphrodite, Poseidon and the other familiar Olympian gods did not at first exist, only coming into being after the creation of Earth and Sky, which also were considered gods.

CREATION MYTH

According to Hesiod, the Universe existed first as a vast nothingness, a vacant space for which the Greek word is 'Chaos'. From Chaos arose Gaia, who was conceived both as our planet Earth and as a great mother goddess. More primordial elemental gods would follow. Eros, the force of desire, also arose from Chaos, and next came Erebos (Darkness) and Nyx

▶

EXPERT BIO

ANNETTE GIESECKE

Annette Giesecke is Professor of Classics and Chair of Ancient Greek and Roman Studies at the University of Delaware. She is the author of *Classical Mythology A to Z: An Encyclopedia of Gods & Goddesses, Heroes & Heroines, Nymphs, Spirits, Monsters and Places* (Black Dog & Leventhal, 2020).

Illustration by: Kevin McGivern

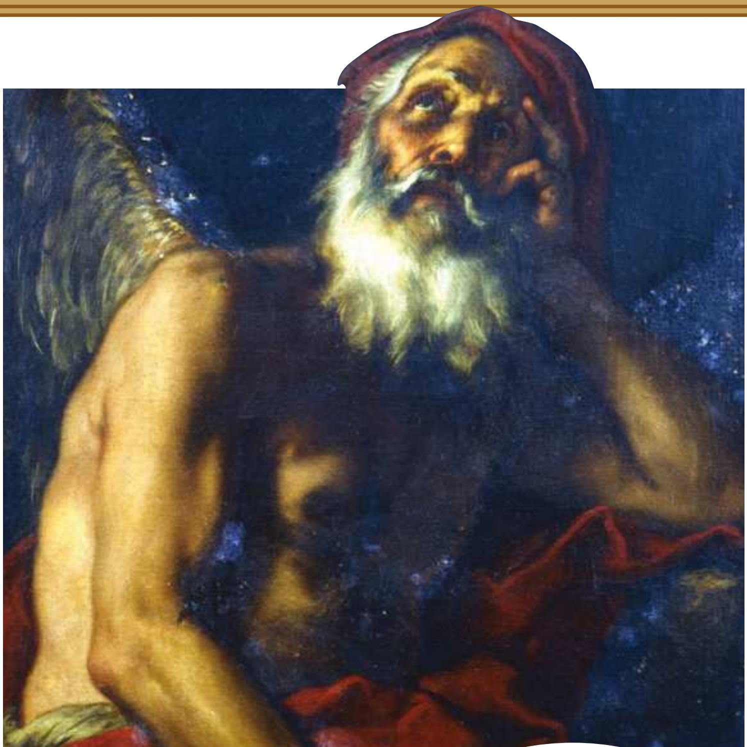
(Night). Erebos and Nyx together bore Aether (the bright upper sky) and Hemera (Day). Wanting companionship and protection, Gaia herself produced Ouranos (Sky) to cover her on all sides.

Gaia and Ouranos became the parents of three sets of offspring. The first to be born were the twelve Titans, the best known of whom are Okeanos (the great river encircling Earth), Rhea and Kronos. Next came three strong and violent Cyclopes, each with a single circular eye. Last came three Hekatoncheires (Hundred-Handers), who, apart from having a hundred arms, each had 50 heads.

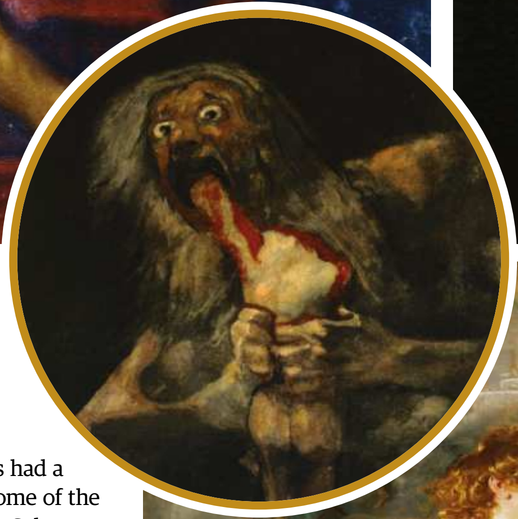
Ouranos detested his monster-children and, at the moment they were born, pressed them back inside their mother, causing her unspeakable outrage and pain. Gaia approached her Titan children, asking them for help, but none had the courage apart from the youngest, Kronos. Armed with a sickle that his mother had given him, Kronos castrated his father when he came to lie with his mother at night, leaving Kronos the most powerful of the gods. Yet, even maimed, the super-fertile Ouranos continued to produce offspring. The Erinyes (spirits of Vengeance), the fully-armed Giants, and the Melian tree nymphs sprang from blood that his wound dripped onto Earth. From the froth where his severed genitals fell into the sea arose Aphrodite, goddess of desire and beauty. Ouranos, for his part, vowed his vengeance.

The Titan brothers and sisters had a great many children together, some of the most notable being Helios (Sun), Selene (Moon), Eos (Dawn), Nike (Victory) and Eris (Strife). Among the gods, incest was never taboo. The Titan Kronos took his sister Rhea as his wife. Kronos and Rhea's children were Hestia (goddess of the hearth), Demeter, Hera, Hades, Poseidon and Zeus, last to be born. But Kronos had learned that one of his children was destined to overthrow him, so he swallowed each of them as they were born, apart from Zeus. By the time her youngest was to be born, a distressed Rhea had devised a ruse by which to trick her mate. She quickly substituted a stone wrapped in swaddling clothes for the infant Zeus, and Kronos was none the wiser. Zeus, meanwhile, was taken to Crete where he was raised by his grandmother Gaia. It was Gaia who devised a plan later used by a fully grown Zeus to cause his father to disgorge his siblings.

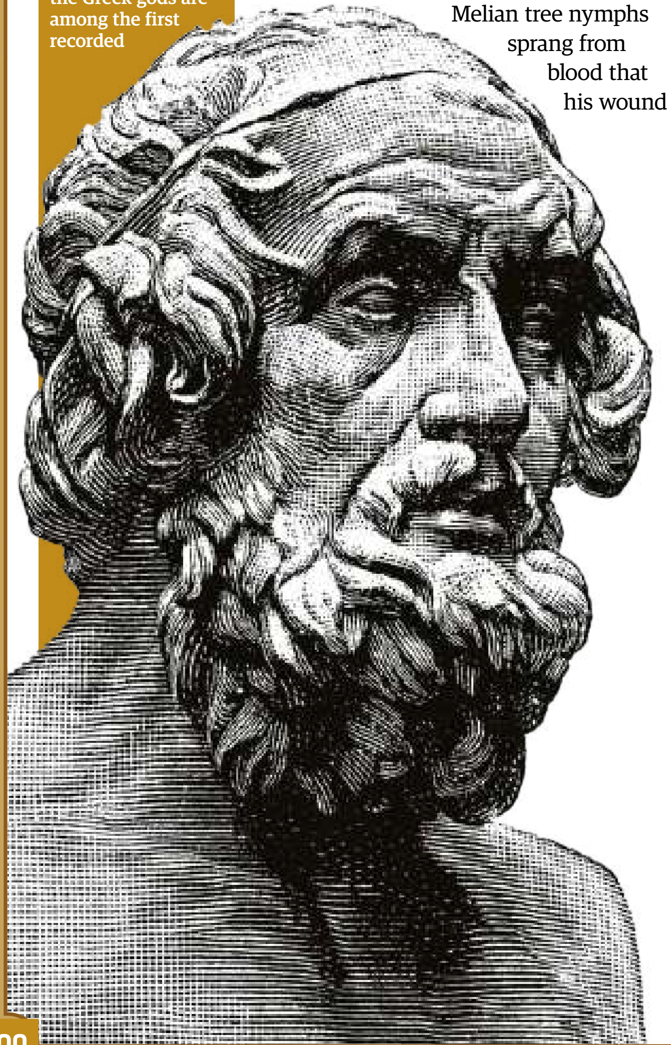
Zeus and his freed family took up residence on Mount Olympus, its peak so high that the mountain linked Heaven and Earth, and consequently became known as the Olympian gods. A power



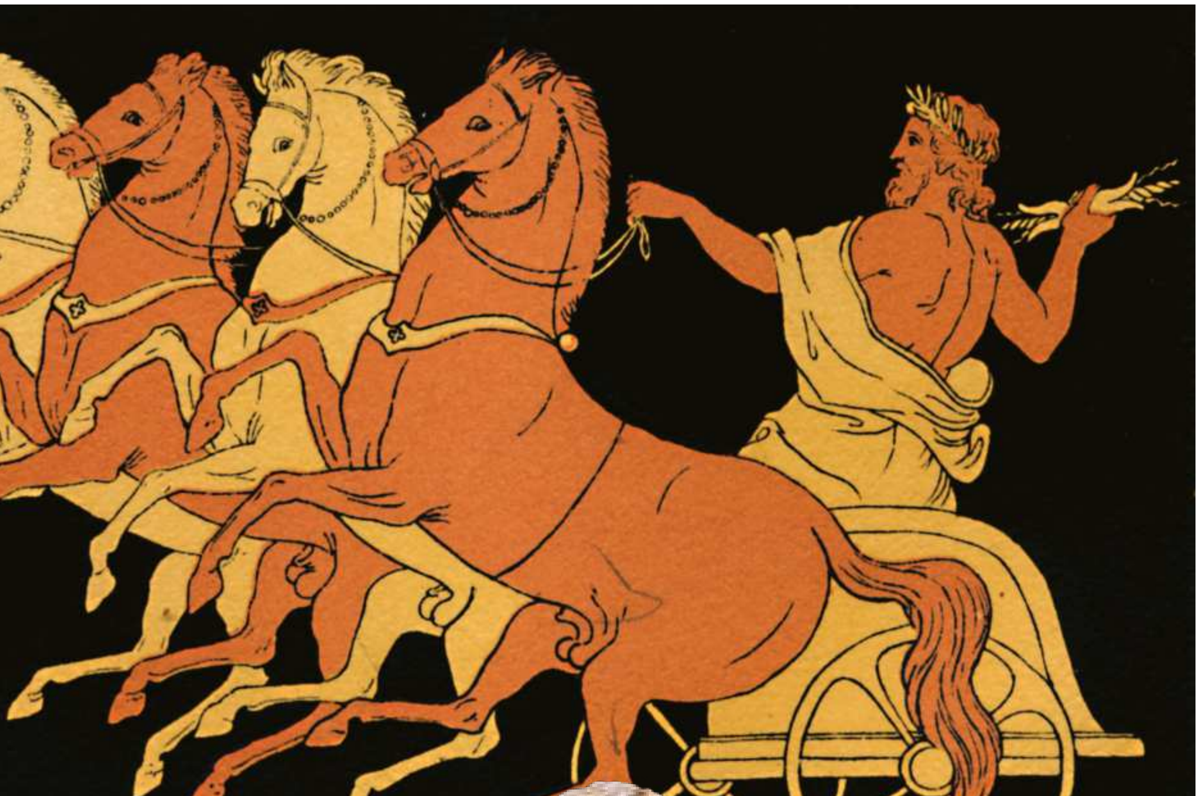
RIGHT Kronos was one of the Titans in Greek mythology and the father of Zeus, among others



RIGHT-INSET Goya's painting of Saturn, the Roman name for Ouranos, devouring his son



BELOW Homer's descriptions of the Greek gods are among the first recorded



TOP Zeus' chariot was pulled by the four winds as horses

MIDDLE-LEFT Eagles were not only messengers of Zeus, but also one of the animals he transformed into

LEFT Zeus is typically depicted with a thunderbolt, sceptre and eagle, representing his power and wisdom

struggle eventually ensued between the older Titans and the new generation of Olympian gods with Zeus at the lead. With help from the Cyclopes and Hekatoncheires, whom he had released from confinement inside Earth, Zeus prevailed in the devastating, decade-long battle. The next challenge he faced came from Typhoeus, Gaia's last child. This was a fearsome monster with a hundred hissing snake heads. When Zeus again was victorious, his siblings urged him to become their king and to assign them spheres of influence. Zeus, his siblings and his offspring would now become the principal gods of the Greeks.

ZEUS

In Greek mythology and religion, Zeus was considered 'Lord of gods and humanity', whose name means 'the bright one'. He was introduced to Greece by Indo-European migrants, likely from the steppeland between the Black and Caspian Seas. His cult, which took precedence over that of an existing Earth mother-goddess, was established in Greece by the 2nd millennium BCE. Called 'the cloud-gatherer', he was the god of the sky and of weather phenomena including rain, thunder and lightning. Reflecting these powers, his symbols were thunderbolts, which were made for him by the Cyclopes and could be used as powerful weapons, and the eagle, most majestic of birds. In addition to being the sky god, Zeus was an important civic god, ensuring that cities were lawfully governed and the households of their citizens were safe.

> "ZEUS WAS INTRODUCED TO GREECE BY INDO-EUROPEAN MIGRANTS"

According to Hesiod, Zeus first took the second-generation Titan goddess Metis (Wisdom) as his wife. A prophecy foretold that Metis would bear him children who would overpower him, so Zeus, wishing to prevent this, swallowed his pregnant wife. After a time, Zeus developed a terrible headache, and when Hephaistos, god of the forge, split open his head with an axe to relieve the pain, the goddess Athena leaped out fully grown and fully armed.

Athena was far from the last child of Zeus, as he had an infamously roving eye, much to the irritation of Hera, his sister and second wife. In fact, depending on the sources consulted, he fathered about 100 children, some with goddesses and some with mortal women. For example, Persephone, who would become Hades' queen, was Zeus' daughter with his sister Demeter. Zeus impregnated the Titan goddess Leto with the twin deities Apollo and Artemis. Semele, a mortal woman, was the mother of Dionysos. Hermes, the messenger god, was his son by Maia, a second-generation Titan. Zeus' 'legitimate' children with Hera were Ares, god of war, and the lesser deities Hebe (Youth) and Eileithyia (goddess of childbirth). Zeus' other numerous children included the heroes Achilles, whose mother was the sea goddess Thetis, and Heracles, who was born of Alcmene, his own grand-daughter.

HERA

Zeus' queen was his sister Hera. Whether or not Hera was a native Greek goddess or an import from other cultures has not been definitively established. It is likely that, like the other Greek female goddesses, she evolved from a Stone Age Earth-mother-goddess who was widely worshipped in the Mediterranean region. However, clay tablets found in Bronze Age archives at Pylos and Thebes in southern

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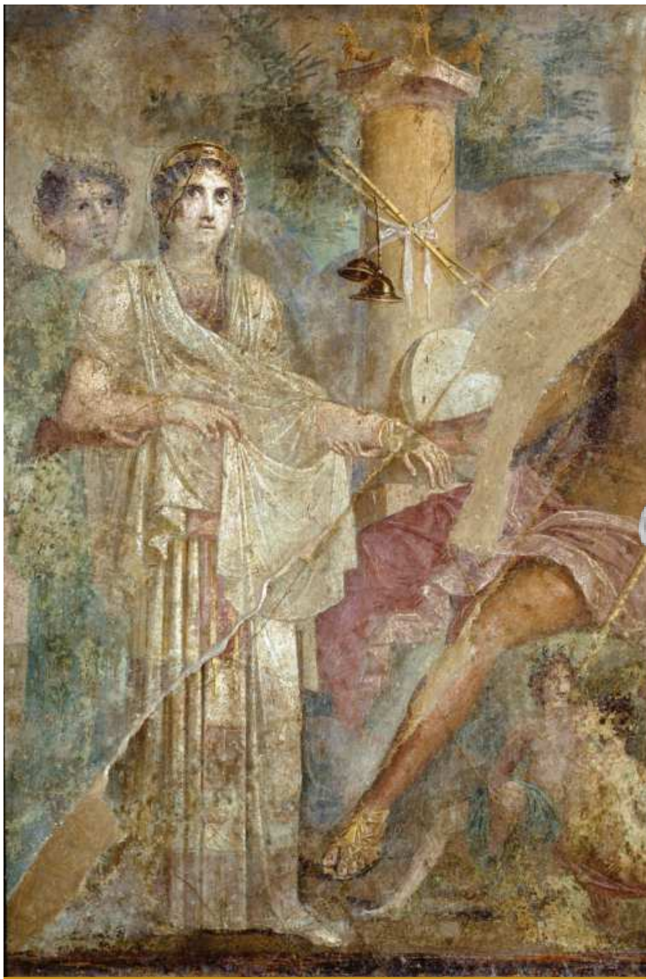
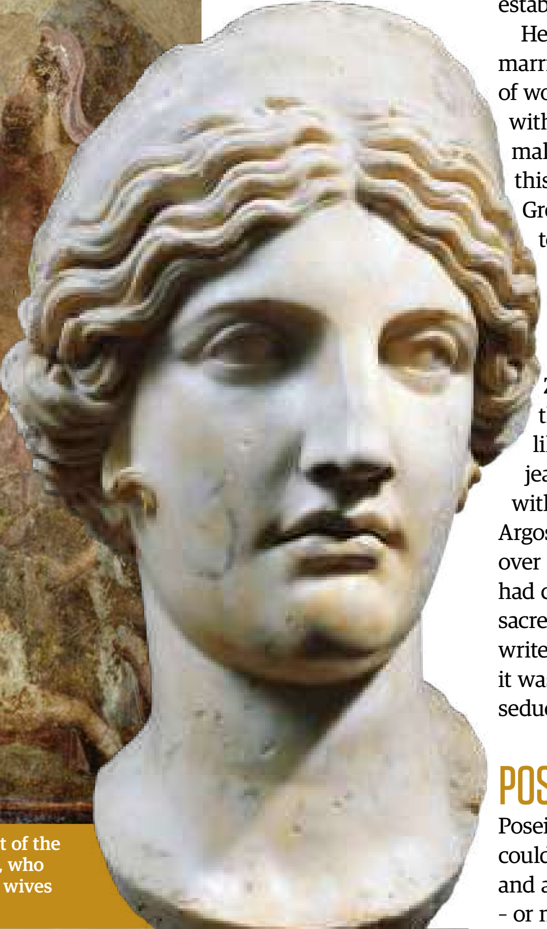
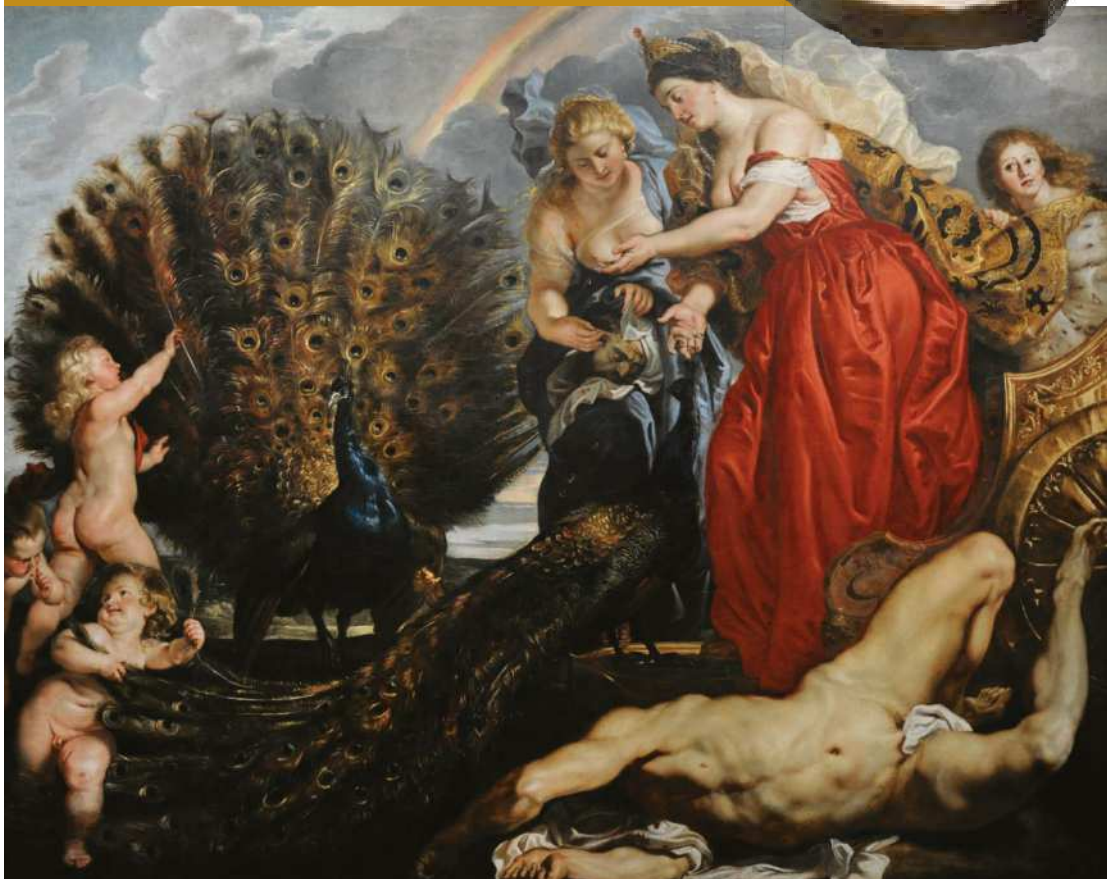


ABOVE A fresco of the wedding of Hera and Zeus found in Pompeii

BELOW The peacock became the symbol of Hera and her desire to keep an eye on Zeus

RIGHT A bust of the goddess Hera, who watched over wives and mothers





Greece reveal that the worship of Hera, as well as her association with Zeus, was established by the 2nd millennium BCE.

Hera was the goddess of childbirth and marriage and, by extension, the protector of women as wives and mothers. Myrtle, with its fragrant flowers, was used to make bridal wreaths and was sacred to this goddess. Hera also watched over Greek cities and other settlements together with their inhabitants. In mythology, Hera is perhaps best remembered for her jealousy over Zeus' many love affairs and her persecution of Heracles, one of Zeus' illegitimate sons. The story of the peacock, Hera's sacred bird, was likewise linked with the goddess' jealousy. The goddess decorated its tail with the hundred eyes of the monstrous Argos, whom she had stationed as a guard over Callisto, one of the fair maidens that had caught lusty Zeus' fancy. Another bird sacred to her was the cuckoo. As the travel writer Pausanias (2nd century CE) wrote, it was disguised as this bird that Zeus first seduced her.

POSEIDON

Poseidon was the Lord of the Sea, who could both stir up and calm the surf, and as such he could be the protector - or nemesis - of mariners. In Homer's *Odyssey*, it was Poseidon in his anger who ensured that the hero Odysseus spent a decade at sea trying to get home to Ithaka from Troy. Poseidon was also the god of earthquakes, who caused the earth to shake when he struck it with his trident; and horses, which were highly prized by the Greeks, were especially sacred to him. The winged horse Pegasus, who was born from the Gorgon Medusa's neck when the hero Perseus decapitated her, was his son, according to Greek myth.

Poseidon was one of the oldest Greek gods, and logically one of the most significant for a seafaring people. As in the case of Zeus and Hera, it is certain that he was worshipped in Greece by the 2nd millennium BCE, as his name, too, has appeared on inscribed clay tablets dating to the Bronze Age. It is possible that Poseidon, if not a native Greek deity, represents a fusion of Indo-European and indigenous sea gods.

HADES

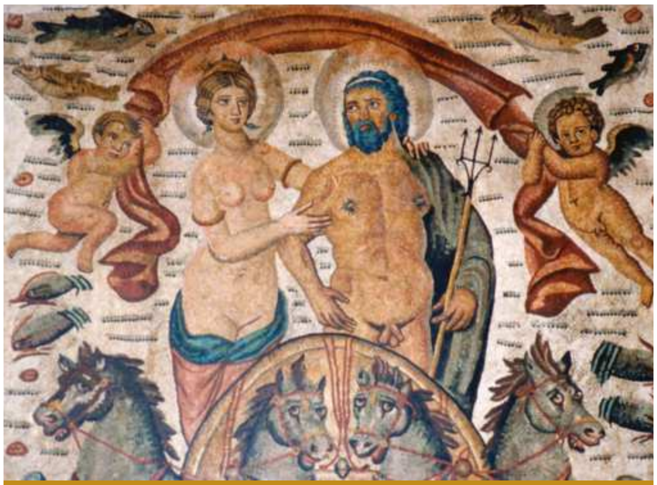
Hades, God of the Underworld and Lord of Death, was not often depicted in Greek art, as his realm and powers were feared. The name Hades may mean

'Unseen One', appropriately for the Dark Lord. However, this god was also called Pluton in the Greek world. Pluton, which is Pluto in Latin, translates as 'Wealthy One', and ancient authors offered various explanations for this. The philosopher Plato, writing in the 5th century BCE, believed that Pluton was a euphemism and that the name referred to the fact that riches, such as precious metals, are derived from beneath the Earth's surface, where Hades lived. Alternatively, as the author Lucian (who lived around 125-180 CE) explained in his diatribe entitled *On Grief* (*de Luctu*), Hades was the wealthy one because he received not only corpses but also abundant grave goods and offerings when a person died.

ATHENA

Athena, the goddess of wisdom and defensive war was also the patron goddess of craftspeople including weavers, potters and metalworkers. She was the only goddess to be depicted fully armed, wearing a helmet and breastplate and carrying a spear. A goddess whose powers included the protection of all Greek cities, Athena had a special relationship with the city of Athens. Whether the goddess gave her name to the city, or the city gave its name to the goddess, is uncertain. The earliest record of her name, which dates to approximately 1400 BCE, appears to mean 'Lady of Athens', suggesting that the city came before the goddess.

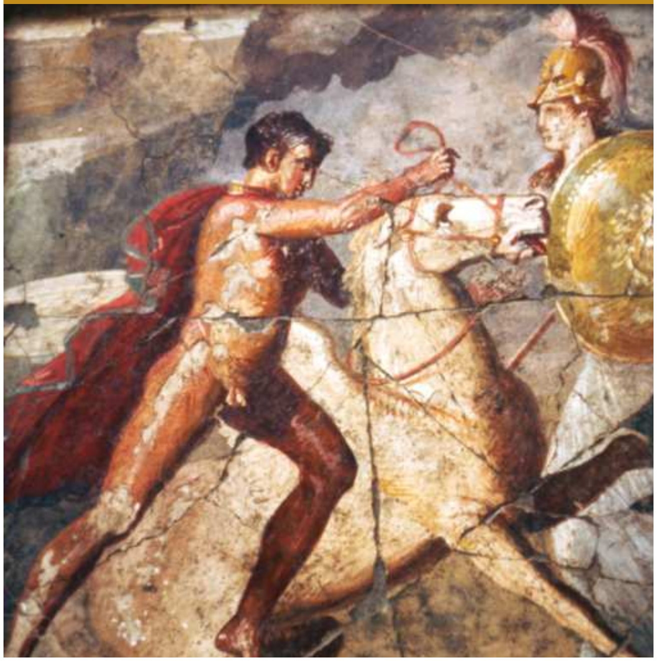
Becoming patron deity of Athens was a distinction for which Athena had to fight, since Poseidon also desired this honour.



ABOVE Poseidon was a particularly important god to the Greeks given the importance of the sea to their economy

BELOW Pegasus is said to have sprung from the neck of Medusa when she was killed

BELOW-RIGHT Poseidon, god of the sea, could stir up the water into storms or calm it



> "WHETHER ATHENA GAVE HER NAME TO THE CITY OF ATHENS, OR THE CITY GAVE ITS NAME TO THE GODDESS, IS UNCERTAIN"

A contest between the gods was arranged, according to Greek mythology. Poseidon struck the Acropolis with his pitchfork and a salt spring erupted from the cleft in the rock. This spring symbolised the city's prospective naval power. Next Athena struck the earth with her spear, producing the first olive tree. The Athenians judged the olive to be the more valuable gift, and it would come to pass that olive oil was a mainstay of the Athenian economy.

DEMETER

Demeter was the goddess of grain, agriculture and the harvest. The etymology of her name remains disputed,

TELLING TALES

Were Homer and Hesiod retelling older stories?

Although Homer is known as the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, he may actually have been the last in a long string of poets who recited these epic poems orally over centuries, reshaping them with every telling. Some language in the poems, as well as some artefacts described, like boars' tusk helmets, can be dated to the Bronze Age (circa 3000 – 1159 BCE). The same is true of Hesiod and the works attributed to him. It may also be the case, as some scholars have persuasively argued, that Homer and Hesiod were fabricated culture heroes and that the works we now have preserved in writing should be viewed as the creation of a collective of oral poets. Just as there are no certain biographical facts about either poet, there are no portraits of them dating to their traditional lifetime. The many portrait busts in existence were based on later imaginings of the poets' appearances. Interestingly, both were imagined as having been blind.

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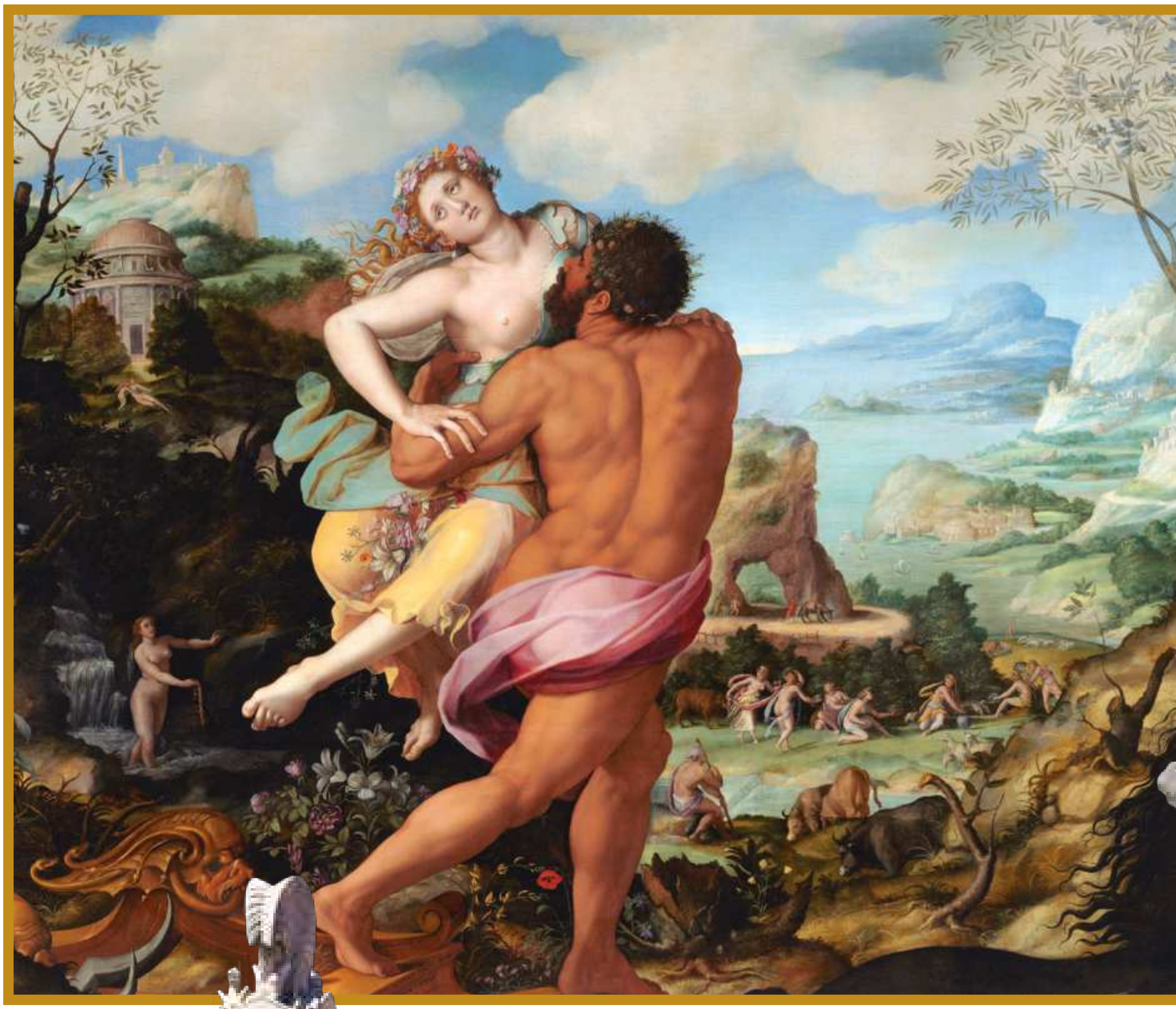
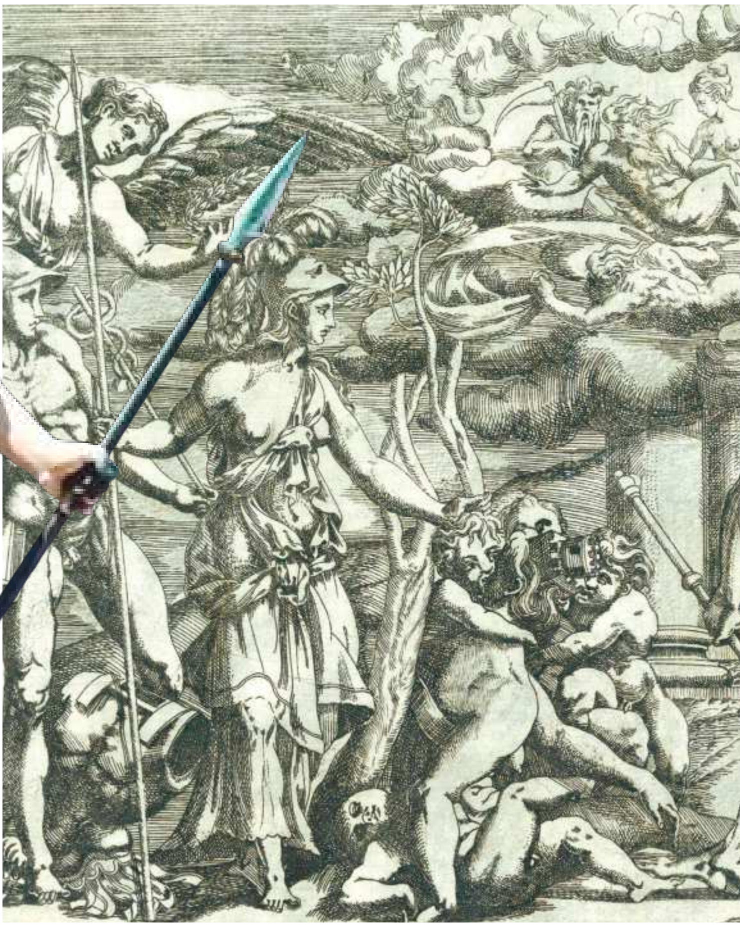
but as early as the Classical Period (5th century BCE) it was believed that her name could be a combination of the Greek words for 'earth' (gē) and 'mother' (mētēr). As guarantor of the Greeks' staple foods, she was an enormously important deity who was worshipped throughout Greece. Her portraits typically show her holding a sheaf of grain or a torch. While the sheaf of grain is clearly linked with her role as goddess of agriculture, the torch was related to her most important myth, the search for Persephone. The daughter of Demeter and Zeus, Persephone was abducted by Hades, god of the Underworld, to be his queen. While Demeter, deep in sorrow, wandered the Earth looking for her daughter, crops ceased to grow. As a result, humans went hungry and were unable to make sacrifices to the gods. When Zeus intervened and requested Persephone's return, it was discovered that Persephone had eaten the seeds of a pomegranate while in the Underworld. This bound her to spend part of the year with Hades in the realm of the dead and part with her mother among the Olympian gods. The annual separation of Demeter from her daughter explains why, during the winter months, the fields are barren, with vegetation coming to life again in spring only with Persephone's return.



APHRODITE

Reflecting her birth from the frothing sea, Aphrodite's name means 'Gift from the Foam'. Aphrodite was the goddess of beauty, sexual love and desire, who ensured the fertility of humans as well as their flocks and fields. As goddess of gardens, Aphrodite also caused garden plants to grow and flowers to blossom. Roses, which are intensely fragrant, sensuous flowers were especially sacred to her. It is this flower that was said to have bloomed on the sands where a newly born Aphrodite first stepped ashore. By some accounts she first stepped ashore on the island of Cythera, and by others at Paphos, modern Kouklia, on the island of Cyprus. For this reason she was called both the 'Cytherean' and 'Paphian' goddess.

Even in antiquity it was suspected that Aphrodite was not a native Greek goddess.

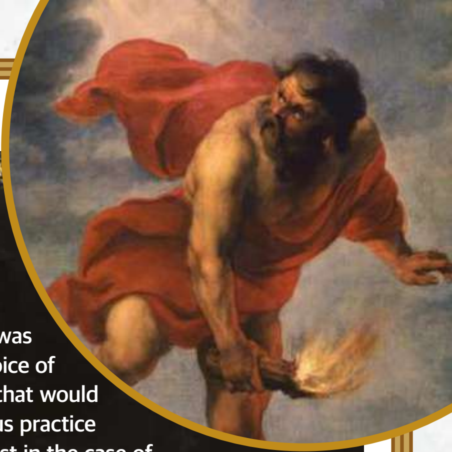


TOP-LEFT The abduction of Persephone is one of the most famous and important Greek myths

TOP-RIGHT Hades with Cerberus, the three-headed dog that guards his gate

RIGHT Athena is nearly always seen in armour despite being a goddess of peace

FAR-RIGHT Athena and Poseidon battled for supremacy in Athens, with the goddess winning



SCRAPS FOR THE GODS

How Prometheus ties into Greek ceremonial traditions

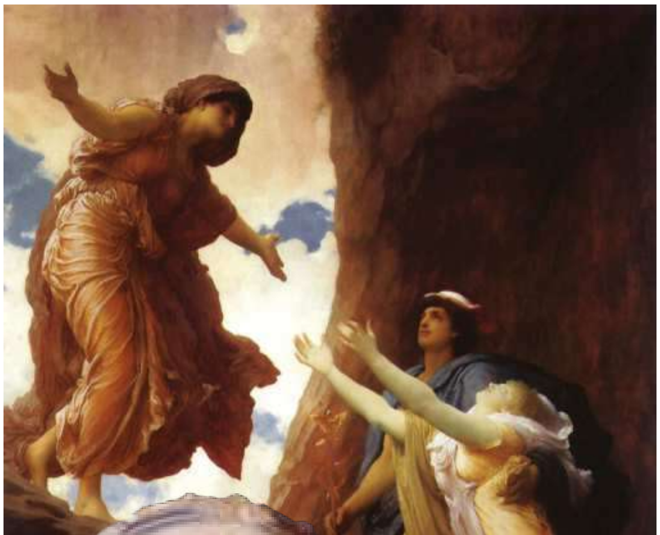
It may seem curious that the Greeks kept the best parts of sacrificial animals for themselves to enjoy on the occasion of a sacrifice and offered the gods what was essentially waste. A myth recounted by the poet Hesiod explains this. There was a time when gods and humans feasted together on a more or less equal footing, with no clear distinction between their privileges. When it came time to draw a distinction, the Titan Prometheus, who would gain a reputation for helping humans at the gods' expense, divided the carcass of a sacrificial ox into two different kinds of portions. He wrapped the precious portions of meat in bits of the ox's unappetising stomach and wrapped the animal's undesirable bones in a juicy, delicious-smelling, layer of fat. Zeus was given the first choice of portion, a choice that would determine religious practice for eternity, at least in the case of the Olympian gods. He was tempted by the juicy bones, and made a decision he instantly regretted. To punish humans, Zeus withheld fire from them. But again Prometheus outwitted him and snuck fire back to humans in a hollow fennel stick. For this Zeus punished Prometheus by binding him in chains and having an eagle eat at his liver every day only to have it regrow every night. Eventually, Heracles set Prometheus free as he traversed the Earth ridding it of monsters that plagued humanity.

There is still much uncertainty about her origins, but archaeological evidence of cult activity on the island of Cyprus suggests that this island played a critical role in her actual genesis during the Bronze Age (roughly 2500-1050 BCE). This Greek goddess most likely evolved from the Middle Eastern fertility goddesses Ishtar and Astarte, both descended from the Mesopotamian Inanna.

DIONYSUS

Dionysus is best known as the god of wine and revelry, but this is only part of a much more complex picture. As the Greek tragedian Euripides (who lived circa 480-406 BCE) explains in his play the *Bacchae*, Dionysus came to Greece from the ancient Middle East. In origin he was a deity of liquid life, specifically in vegetation. Similar to Aphrodite, he caused plants to thrive, but his specific power resided in the liquid - sap - that caused plants to grow. Over time his powers grew, and he was linked with more life-sustaining liquids from plant and animal sources, including milk, honey, blood and wine, which, heavily watered down, was the Greeks' beverage of choice. Also according to Euripides, the Greeks viewed wine as ▶

> "DIONYSUS IS BEST KNOWN AS THE GOD OF WINE AND REVELRY, BUT THIS IS ONLY PART OF A MUCH MORE COMPLEX PICTURE"



ABOVE Persephone being returned to Demeter by Hermes after being trapped in hell. Her absence and return was the Greek story for the changing seasons

LEFT Demeter was goddess of the harvest, but also oversaw the sacred law of life and death

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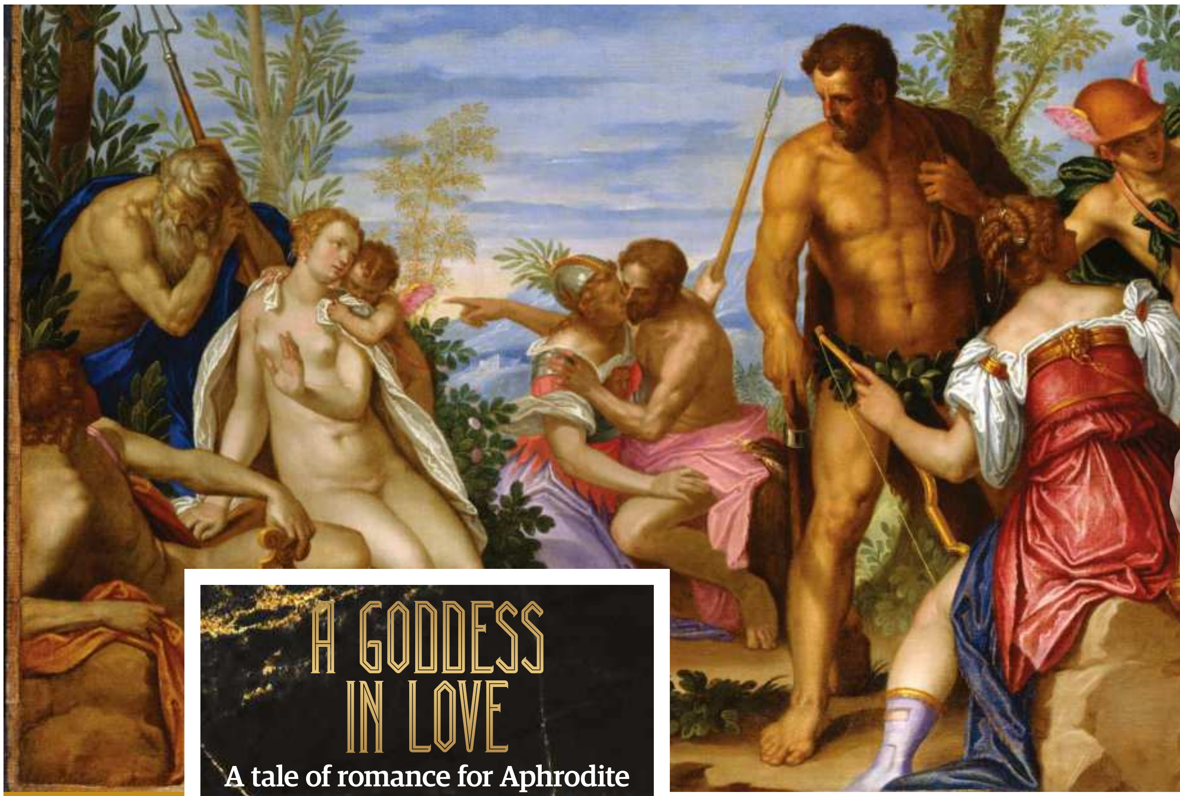


ABOVE A depiction of the gods of Olympus gathered together

BELOW Aphrodite was known as Venus by the Romans and is frequently paired with nautical imagery as she was said to have emerged from the sea

Dionysus' most precious gift, since its relaxing effects allowed people to forget their everyday worries. An additional bonus, especially to those marginalised in society, was that everyone was equal in this god's eyes: male and female, slave and free, even animal and human.

SANCTUARIES AND SACRIFICE

While the Olympian gods were worshipped throughout Greece, each of them had sanctuaries in cities or regions with which they had close ties. These sanctuaries were sacred spaces separated from the secular world by a wall or boundary markers, and at a minimum they contained a temple and an outdoor altar. The temples were conceived of as the gods' houses, not places of worship. Acts of worship could take many forms, including festivals that honoured the god and sacrifices consisting of burnt offerings made on the altar. Most often it was sheep, goats, pigs and cattle that were sacrificed, but offerings could be as humble as barley cakes and fish or as grand as dogs and sheep. The roasted meat was then divided among the devoted population, often in a communal meal. Pouring drink offerings (libations) of milk, water, honey or olive oil onto an altar or the earth (for gods of the Underworld) were also an important part of Greek ritual practice.

Olympia, which took its name from Moun Olympus, is in southern Greece and was Zeus' sacred ground, though he shared it with other lesser gods as well. The travel writer Pausanias recorded that there were in fact over 70 shrines and temples here dedicated to a range of heroes and gods. However, the glory of Olympia was the great temple of Zeus, which contained an enormous ivory and gold cult statue of Zeus seated on his throne. Pausanias remarked that this statue (about 12m in height) was so large that if the sculpted god had stood up from his throne, he would have broken through the temple's roof. Considered in antiquity to be one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, it had been destroyed by the 5th century CE.

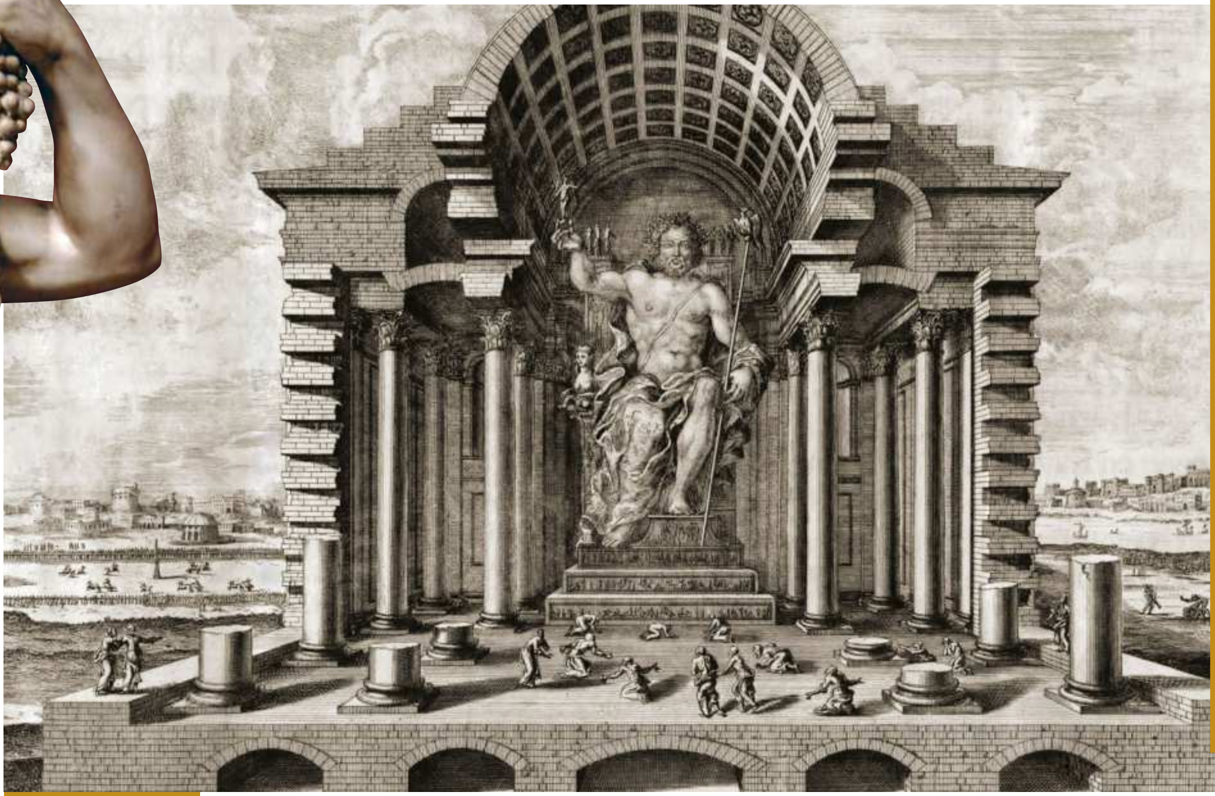
Eleusis, which lies on the Saronic Gulf about 20km northwest of Athens, was the site most sacred to Demeter. Visitors from across the Mediterranean would come to Eleusis in order to participate in sacred rites known as the Eleusinian Mysteries, which offered celebrants both a fruitful harvest and a blessed afterlife. As participants were required to keep the proceedings secret, not a great deal is known about these mysteries. It is known, however, that preparation for the festivities involved carrying unknown sacred objects in procession and purifying oneself and a sacrificial piglet in the sea nearby.

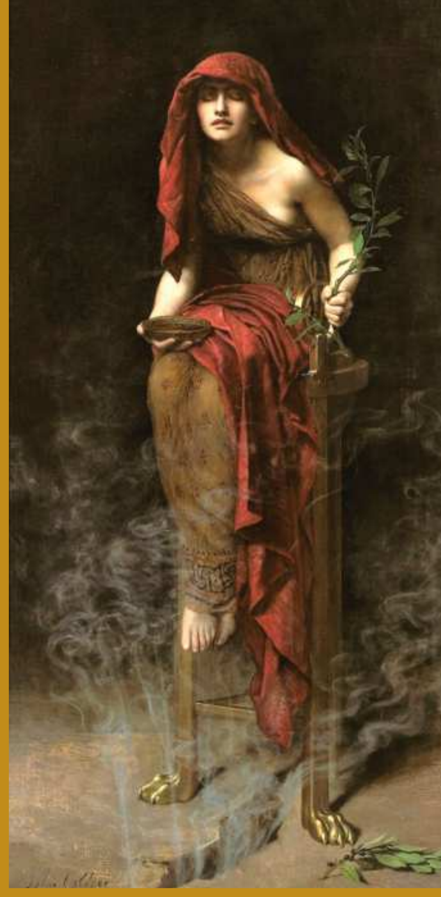
> "PAUSANIAS REMARKED THAT IF THE SCULPTED GOD HAD STOOD UP, HE WOULD HAVE BROKEN THROUGH THE TEMPLE'S ROOF"

A GODDESS IN LOVE

A tale of romance for Aphrodite

In myth Aphrodite, this goddess who brought love to others, was not herself immune to love. She seduced the Trojan hero Anchises and the result of their passion was Aeneas, whom the Romans, including Julius Caesar and the emperor Augustus, claimed as their ancestor. Another of Aphrodite's loves was the handsome young Adonis, to whom she was devoted until he was gored to death by a wild boar. Foolishly, he had disregarded her warning not to go hunting on that fateful day. While married to the god Hephaistos, she took Ares, the god of war, as a lover. Although Hephaistos, with his misshapen leg, was the only god with a physical challenge, he was an extremely skilled craftsman. In a story told by Homer in the *Odyssey*, Hephaistos trapped his cheating wife and her lover in a net as they tossed amorously in bed. Aphrodite's only child, Eros, was her son with Ares. Eros, whose arrows could cause people to fall in love or, alternatively, to run from their lover, is best known by his Latin name Cupid. Eros, the son of Aphrodite, is different from the primordial force called 'Eros' that appears in Hesiod's creation myth, but he may well have evolved as an offshoot or re-imagination of the older elemental deity.





ABOVE-LEFT As the god of festivity, it's no wonder that Dionysus is a god well known for celebration and drinking

ABOVE-MIDDLE A sketch of what Zeus' temple in Olympia, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, would have looked like

ABOVE-RIGHT The oracle of Delphi was a hugely important figure who was thought to be able to communicate with Apollo

BELOW The Altis of Olympia was the sacred grove dedicated to Zeus where offerings would be made

The Acropolis of Athens, meanwhile, was the location of Athena's premier temple, the Parthenon. The Acropolis served as her primary sanctuary, though it was shared with other gods and contained other temples. The city of Athens held an annual festival called the Panathenaia ('all-Athenian') in the goddess' honour. This festival was held on Athena's birthday in the month of Hekatombaion (July/August), which was named after the hecatomb – the sacrifice of 100 cattle that took place at this event.

Delphi, Apollo's most important sanctuary, is located in central Greece on the steep, rugged slopes of Mount Parnassus. The presence from the 8th century BCE onwards of abundant offerings, primarily ceramic and bronze, indicates that cult activities were well-established here by this time. Delphi was and still is best known as the site of the Delphic Oracle. The actual oracle was the priestess of Apollo called the Pythia. The Pythia sat in the innermost, most sacred part of Apollo's temple. People from all over Greece and beyond came to Delphi wishing for answers to all manner of questions. Before consulting the oracle via her interpreters, pilgrims needed to make appropriate sacrifices to the gods. After purifying herself with sacred waters and performing a burnt sacrifice of barley and laurel leaves, the Pythia seated herself on a tripod and could go into a trance. Geologic investigations by JZ de Boer and his team at the turn of the 21st century revealed the presence of intoxicating ethylene vapours rising from a fault in the bedrock below the Temple of Apollo, substantiating statements made in antiquity by the 1st century CE author Plutarch and others that the Pythia's trance was induced by hallucinogenic vapours.

LEGACY OF THE GODS

While processions may no longer wind their way through Athens, the gods of Greece have endured in myriad ways. They have continued to exist, and to evolve, in literature, art, film, music and novel forms of popular culture through the ages. Meanwhile, it is still possible to visit many of the houses of the gods and their sanctuaries, whether in person or virtually. Among the best-preserved in Greece may be the Parthenon, Olympia and Delphi, but there is so much more to see. No trip to Greece would be complete without an excursion to the remains of Poseidon's temple at Sounion, for example, which is on a promontory overlooking the sea 40km southeast of Athens. It is an awe-inspiring place from which to experience the rising or setting sun, and to imagine Greece during the time of the ancient gods. ○

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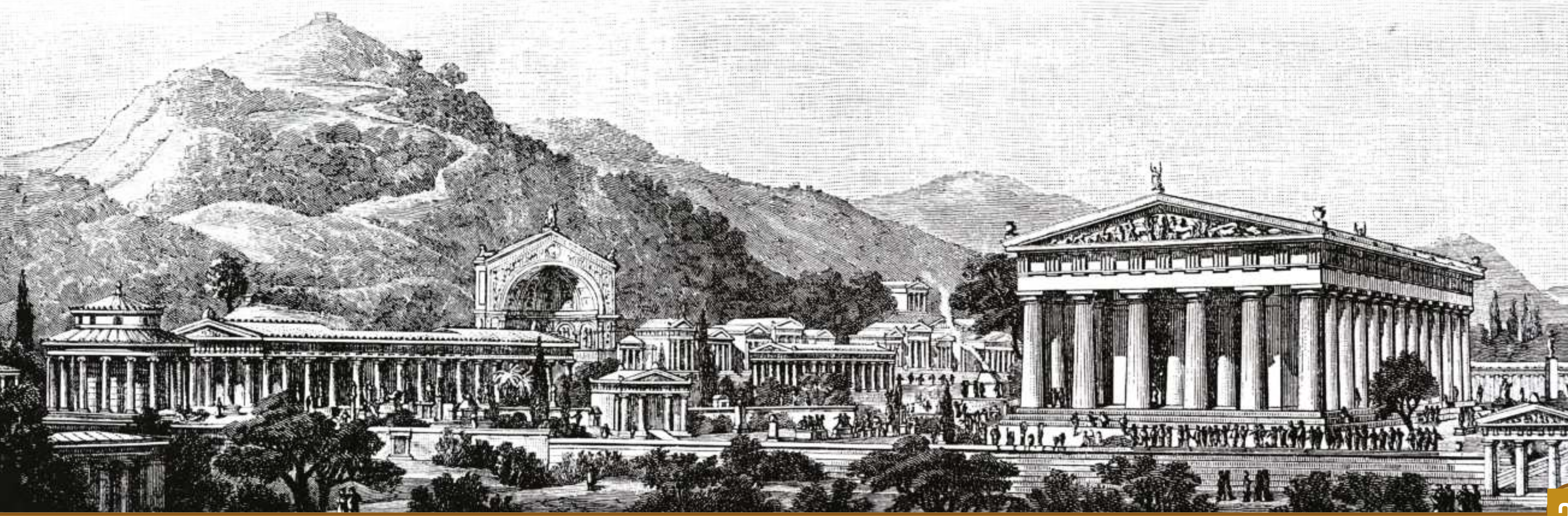

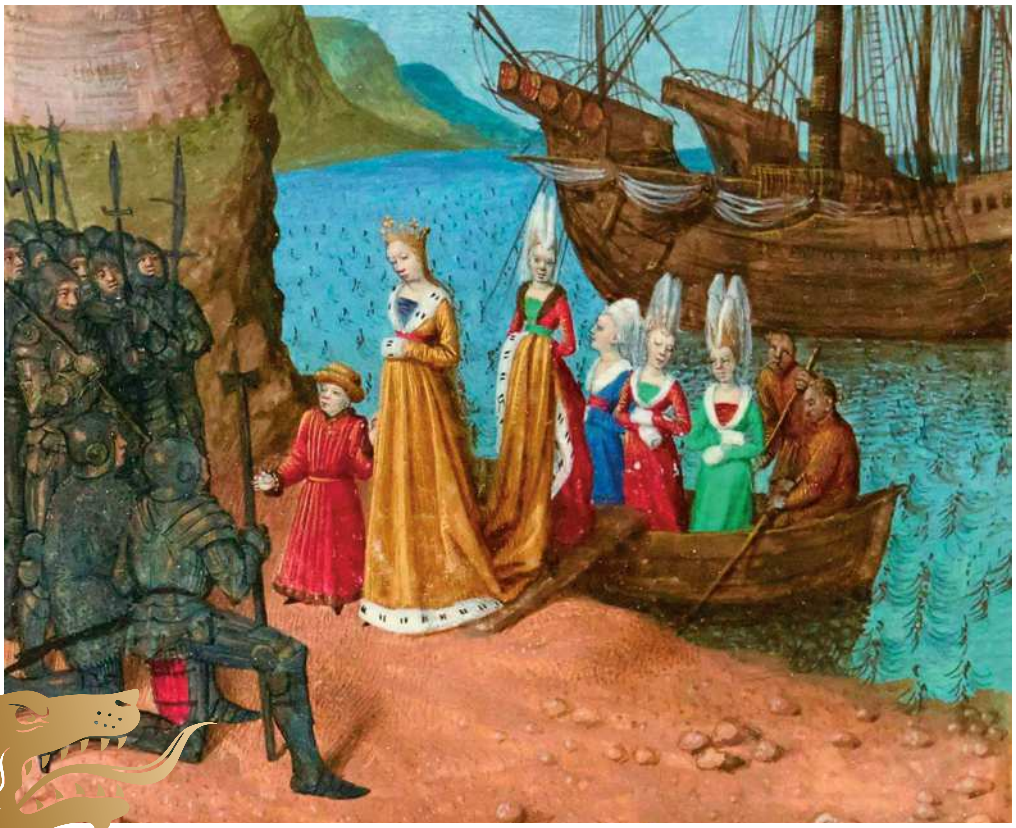

雲霞雙闕麗月暎朝曦
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ROYAL WOMEN

Queens who ruled the roost

042 Isabella: Traitor, adulterer, murderer
Did the French queen really usurp her husband to make her claim to the throne of England?

052 China's shadow empress
From a concubine to the most powerful person in China, learn the story of Empress Dowager Cixi

058 Empress Matilda
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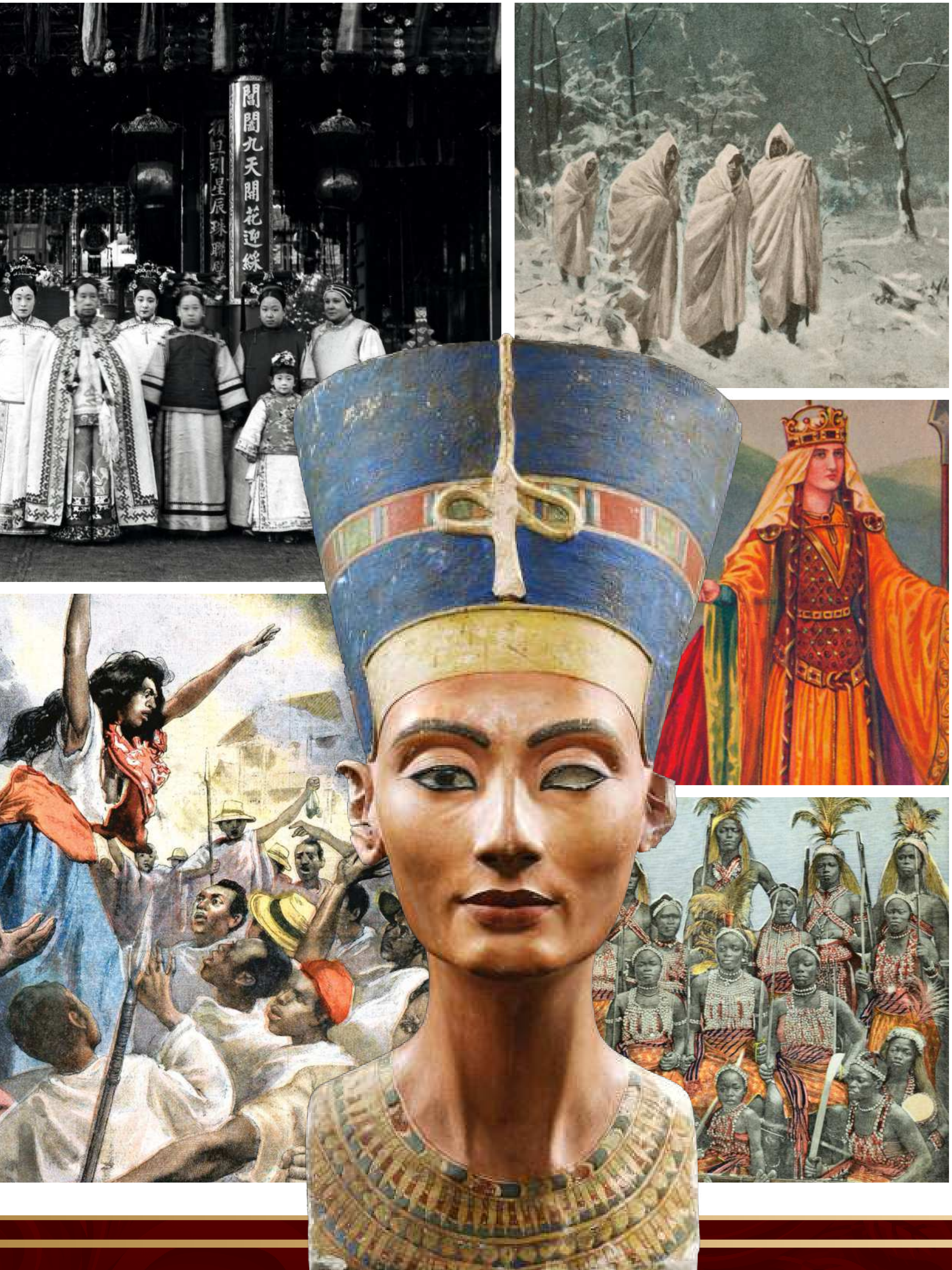
064 Great queens of Africa
Some of the powerful women who helped to make their kingdoms thrive and prosper across the continent


閶闔九天開花迎綵
復旦引星辰珠聯璧

TRAITOR • ADULTERER • MURDERER

ISABELLA

Did the French queen really usurp Edward II to claim England as her own?

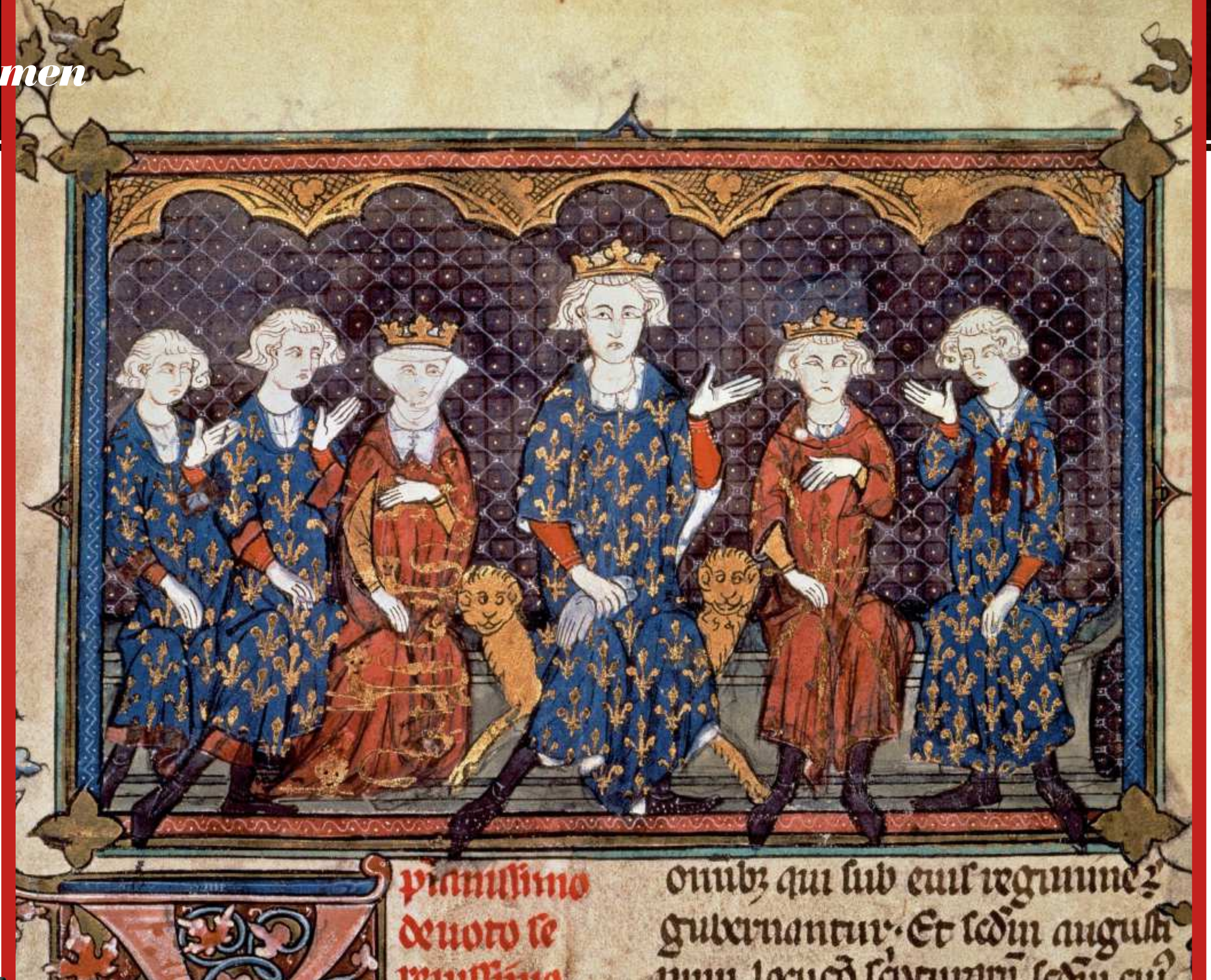
Written by Jessica Leggett

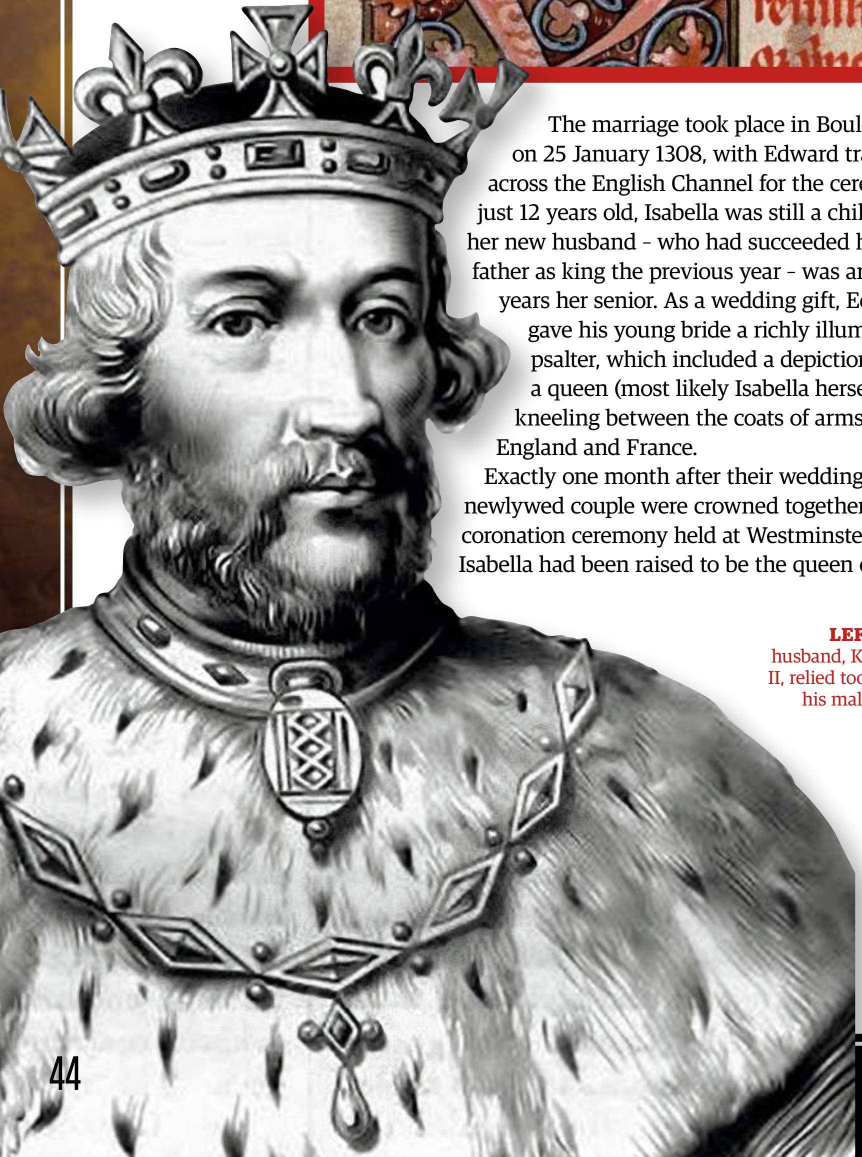
Illustration by: Joe Cummings

One of the most notorious figures in English history, Isabella of France has been described as a 'shadow queen', a 'rebel queen' and the 'She-Wolf of France'. The only queen to have rebelled against her husband, Isabella lived in a time when female power was viewed as a threat - and she was willing to do whatever it took to fight for what was rightfully hers.

Isabella was born in Paris around 1295, the daughter of King Philip IV of France and Queen Joan I of Navarre. Like all royal princesses, she was a political pawn raised with the expectation that her marriage would secure a foreign alliance. In 1299, when Isabella was three or four, it was decided she would marry Edward of Caernarfon, King Edward I of England's heir. The betrothal was part of the Treaty of Montreuil, a peace agreement between the two countries. ▶

RIGHT A young Isabella with her father Philip, her brothers and her uncle





LEFT Isabella's husband, King Edward II, relied too heavily on his male favourites

The marriage took place in Boulogne on 25 January 1308, with Edward travelling across the English Channel for the ceremony. At just 12 years old, Isabella was still a child while her new husband – who had succeeded his late father as king the previous year – was around 11 years her senior. As a wedding gift, Edward gave his young bride a richly illuminated psalter, which included a depiction of a queen (most likely Isabella herself) kneeling between the coats of arms of England and France.

Exactly one month after their wedding, the newlywed couple were crowned together in a joint coronation ceremony held at Westminster Abbey. Isabella had been raised to be the queen of England and the coronation should have been a joyous occasion. Yet there was one person whose presence likely soured this moment for the new queen. His name? Piers Gaveston, 1st Earl of Cornwall.

> "EDWARD'S TREATMENT OF ISABELLA AT THE CORONATION, JUST ONE MONTH INTO THEIR REIGN, WAS AN INAUSPICIOUS START"

Gaveston, who had joined Edward's household while the latter was still a prince, was the king's favourite and their close relationship had sparked rumours that they were lovers.

At the coronation, it was Gaveston who carried the king's crown into the Abbey, reflecting his importance to Edward and his influence on the king. To make matters worse, at the coronation feast the king apparently showed more interest in spending time with his favourite than with his new queen.

Although Isabella was young, she was highly intelligent and she would have known exactly what was expected of her: to be a dutiful wife, a loyal queen and, one day, mother to a future king. But she would have also known how she should have been treated as a queen. Her treatment at the coronation, just one month into their reign, was an inauspicious start.

With Gaveston's presence and, indeed, Edward's penchant for male favourites, it is commonly assumed that Isabella endured an unhappy marriage with the king from the very beginning. However, the fact that they ultimately had four children together – Edward, John, Eleanor and Joan – suggests that this assumption is untrue.

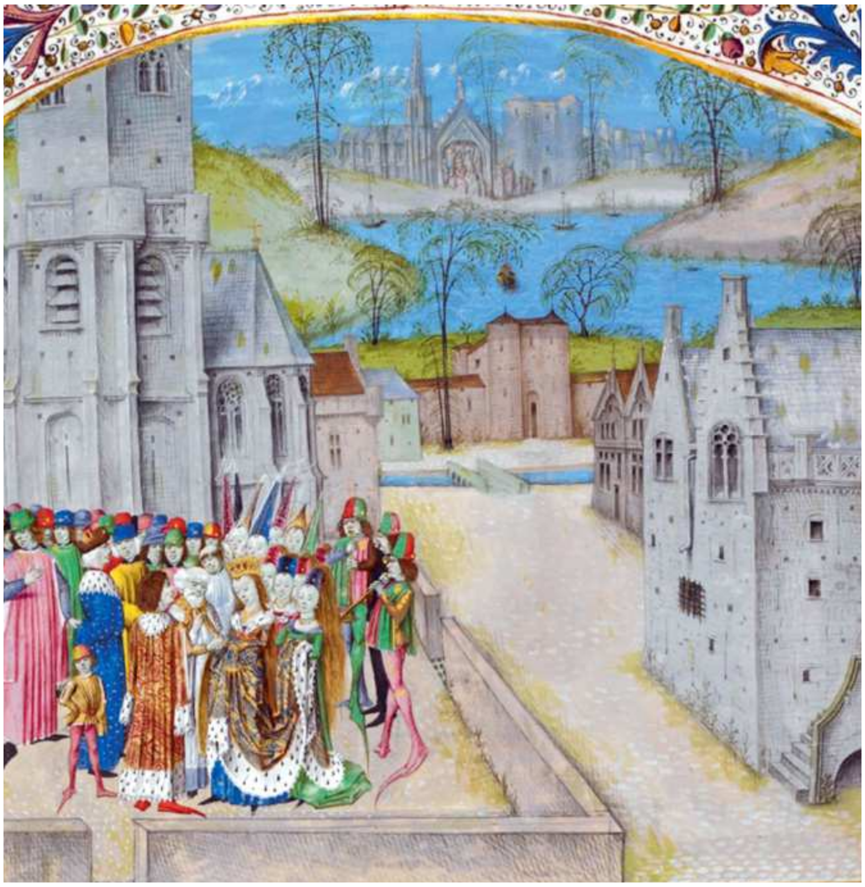
Edward also famously saved his wife while they were paying a visit to France in 1313. During their stay, a fire broke out in their tent and Edward carried Isabella, both of them completely naked, to safety. Edward's heroic actions that night were deemed by contemporaries as an act of love.

Playing the supportive wife and queen, Isabella tolerated Gaveston and they managed to co-exist with one another. Nevertheless, Edward's relationship with Gaveston still caused issues with the English barons. These barons, led by Edward's cousin Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, opposed Gaveston's influence and power, especially because it greatly diminished their own. The situation had already been strained when Isabella first arrived in England, but the simmering tensions finally boiled over in 1311 after Edward led a failed military campaign against Scotland.

That October, 21 barons drafted the Ordinances, a series of regulations that not only restricted Edward's power but demanded that Gaveston be banished. The king accepted these demands and sent Gaveston into exile, only to have him return shortly afterwards. Infuriated, Lancaster and the barons decided to deal with Gaveston themselves once and for all.

Edward, wanting to protect his favourite, fled north with Gaveston and Isabella as the barons gave chase – at this point, the queen was pregnant. The three of them ended up being separated, with Edward and Isabella heading to York while Gaveston was in Scarborough, where he was captured by the barons. Found guilty of being a traitor, Gaveston was executed on 19 June under the orders of Lancaster. Five months later, Isabella gave birth to her first child and son, Edward, at Windsor Castle.

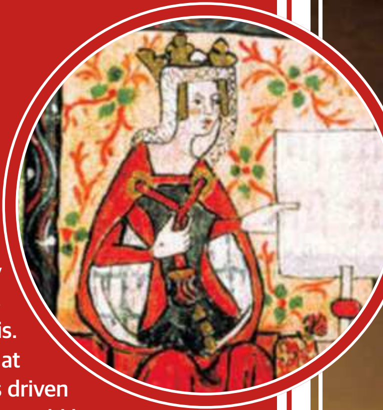
The death of Gaveston gave Isabella the chance to enter the political arena, as she encouraged peace between her husband ▶



BELOW A miniature of Isabella and Edward's wedding in France

FORMIDABLE ROYALS

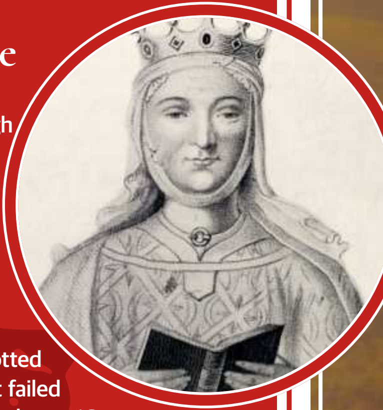
Isabella was not the only medieval queen to fight for her rights



Empress Matilda

1102-67

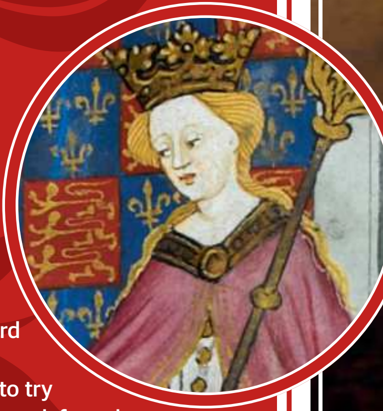
A claimant to the English throne during the Anarchy, a civil war between England and Normandy, Empress Matilda almost became England's first female ruler. She was the daughter and heir of King Henry I, but after his death the throne was seized by her cousin Stephen of Blois. Although Matilda defeated Stephen at the Battle of Lincoln in 1141, she was driven out of London before her coronation could be held. In 1153, she signed the Treaty of Winchester, which agreed that Stephen could remain king as long as Matilda's son, Henry, was named his heir.



Eleanor of Aquitaine

c.1122 – 1204

Eleanor was queen of France through her marriage to King Louis VII. After that marriage was annulled, she became queen of England after marrying King Henry II, with whom she had eight children. The couple eventually became estranged and Eleanor supported her sons Henry, Richard and Geoffrey when they plotted to overthrow their father. The revolt failed and the king imprisoned Eleanor for almost 16 years until she was released by Richard after he ascended the throne. When he left for the Third Crusade Eleanor was chosen to act as regent and govern the country on his behalf.



Margaret of Anjou

1430-82

Margaret was the queen of England as the wife of King Henry VI. She was a leader of the Lancastrian faction in the Wars of the Roses, which was partly triggered by the power vacuum caused by Henry's frequent bouts of mental instability. Fiercely protective of her son, Edward of Westminster, and his right to the English throne, she forged alliances to try and defeat the Yorkist faction. She was defeated and captured at the Battle of Tewkesbury, during which her son was killed. Her cousin, the French King Louis XI, paid a ransom for her and she spent the rest of her life in France.

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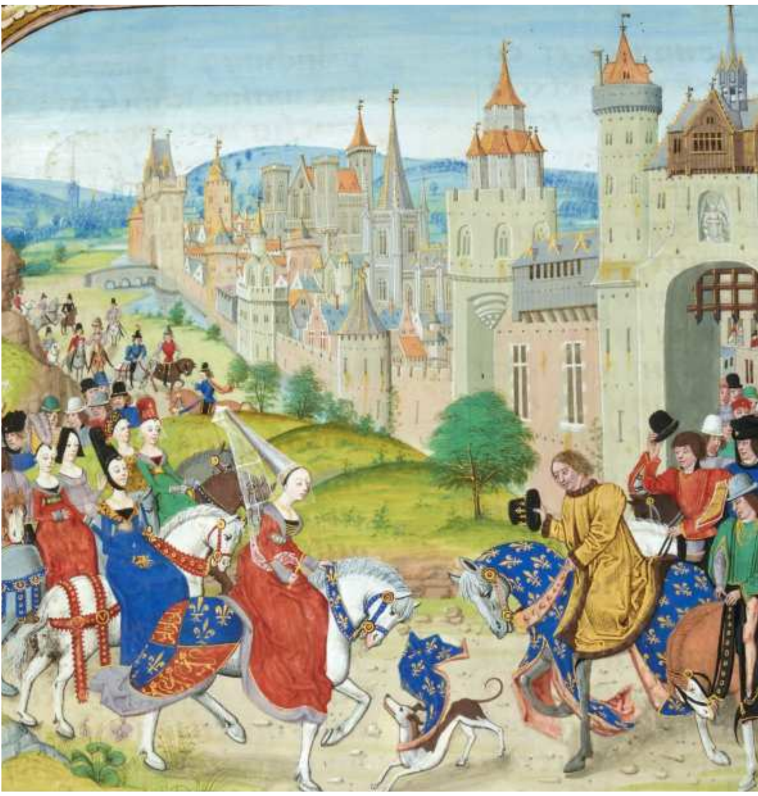

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RIGHT Isabella is welcomed to Paris by her brother, King Charles IV

FAR-RIGHT The Battle of Bannockburn was a disaster for King Edward II

and the barons to avoid a civil war. However, Gaveston's death did little to bridge the growing divide between the barons and their king. Devastated over the loss of his favourite, Edward vowed to get revenge on those responsible. Isabella and Edward's aforementioned visit to France in 1313 had been made in the hope of securing the support of the queen's French relatives against the English barons.

Despite this, Edward found himself stuck after he suffered a humiliating defeat against Robert the Bruce and the Scots at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314, a key victory on the road to Scottish independence. The king needed Lancaster's support to help keep England's northern borders safe, and soon enough the earl had increased his power to the point where he was effectively running the country. (Although ironically, he also turned out to be rather useless at governing.) The following year saw the emergence of the Great Famine that swept through Europe and decimated the English population, fuelling more discontent with the king.

Amid all this chaos was Isabella. With Gaveston dead, she should have assumed her rightful place by her husband's side, but unfortunately for her the king had found himself another male favourite. Hugh Despenser the Younger, as well as his father, had worked their way into becoming Edward's close advisers since Gaveston's death.

Gaveston had been a tolerable thorn in Isabella's side, but the Despensers were a much bigger problem. The younger Despenser was made royal chamberlain in 1318, a position that had previously been held by Gaveston and allowed plenty of access to the king. Again, it's believed Edward and Despenser may have been lovers.

Edward had failed to learn from his experience with Gaveston and his flagrant favouritism for the Despensers antagonised Lancaster and the barons. In 1321, they threatened the king and demanded that the Despensers be exiled. The king, too reliant on his favourites, did not want to banish them. Once again taking on a conciliatory role to prevent an outbreak of war, Isabella went down on her knees and asked her husband to banish the Despensers. The king outwardly agreed but he had every intention of bringing the Despensers back as soon as possible.

With a truce between the two factions agreed, Isabella embarked on a pilgrimage to Canterbury in October 1321. During her return to London she arrived at Leeds Castle in Kent expecting to stay there. However, the castle belonged to Baron Badlesmere, who'd joined Lancaster and his fellow rebels in opposing the king. Badlesmere's wife, Margaret de Clare, refused to let Isabella enter.

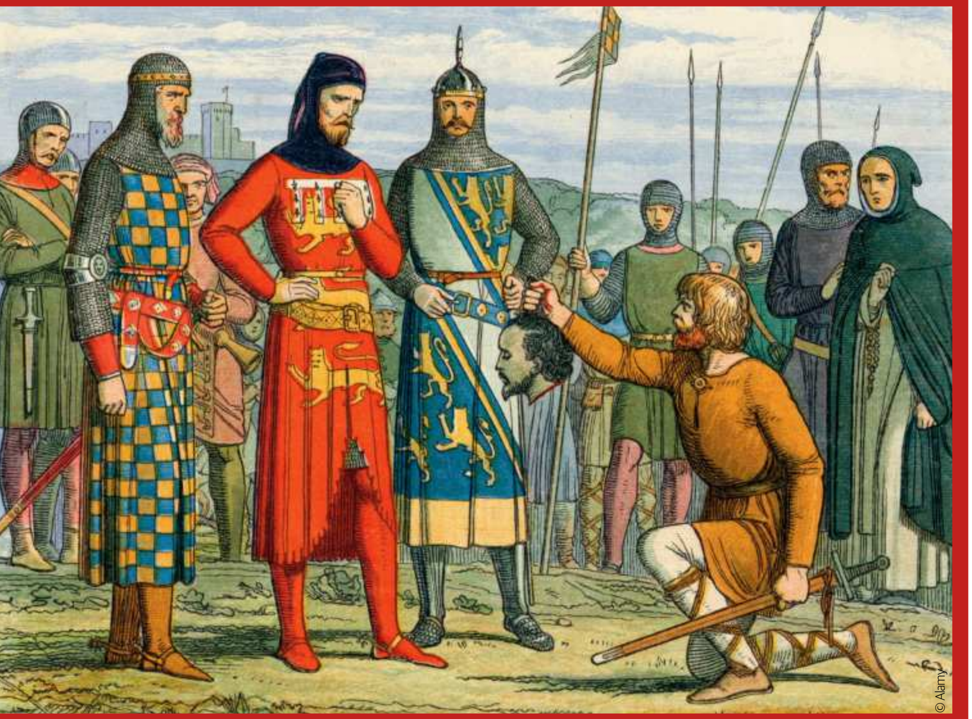
Enraged, Isabella ordered her men to force their way into the castle and, in response Margaret ordered her archers in the garrison to fire on the queen's men. For Edward, this was the perfect justification for waging war on his enemies. He argued that refusing entry to the queen and the attack on her men was an act of treason and he laid siege to the castle. Margaret was forced to surrender and she was thrown into the Tower of London alongside her children, while some of her men were executed.

Considering that Isabella took a detour from the usual pilgrimage route to stop at Leeds Castle, it has been speculated that she may have stopped there to give her husband a reason to attack his enemies. It could have been a deliberate decision or Edward may have advised her to stay there without telling her the reason why. Regardless, the king was now in a strong enough position to recall the Despensers from exile.

Six months later, Edward secured victory at the Battle of Boroughbridge and captured his foremost enemy, Lancaster. Charged with treason, Lancaster was executed and with his death the king was finally able to rid himself of the Ordinances that had restricted his power for a decade. Edward – and the Despensers – were back in control. Unsurprisingly, the king used his newfound position of strength to pursue his enemies and exact revenge for their continued rebellion. Nobody, not even the women or

▶

> "GAVESTON HAD BEEN A TOLERABLE THORN IN ISABELLA'S SIDE, BUT THE DESPENSERS WERE A MUCH BIGGER PROBLEM"



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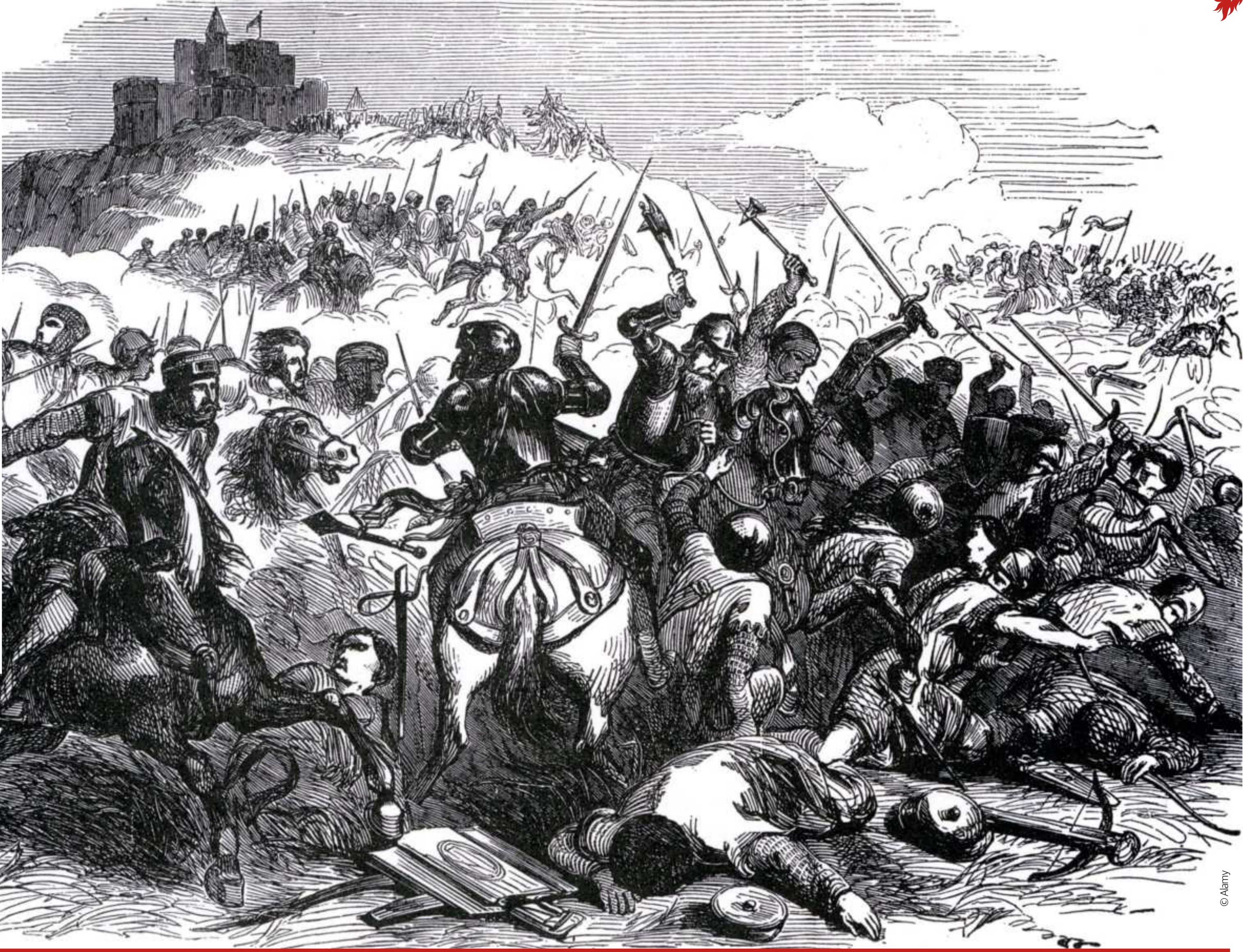
BELOW Gaveston's head is presented to the Earl of Lancaster



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THE PATH TO WAR

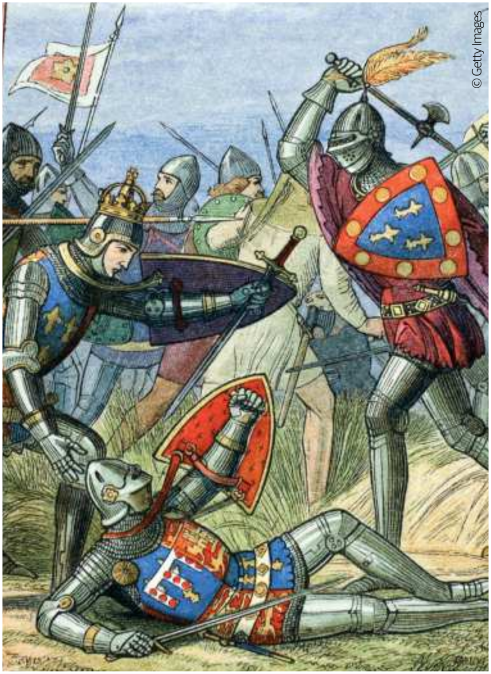
Isabella continued to influence English politics for decades to come

During her time as regent, Isabella attempted to claim the French throne for her son Edward. Her brother, King Charles IV, died in 1328 without leaving a male heir to succeed him. His first cousin, Philip of Valois, was chosen to be the next king of France as Philip VI. However, Edward was actually Charles' nephew and nearest male relative, so why did he not inherit the French crown?

According to Salic law in France, the throne could not be inherited either by a woman or through the female line. Since Edward's claim to the French throne was through Isabella, a daughter of King Philip IV, he was excluded from the line of succession. But like his mother, Edward was not one to give up on what he saw as rightfully his.

He decided to press his claim to the French throne in 1337 after Philip confiscated his territories in France. In England, the throne could be inherited through the maternal bloodline. It was a precedent set by King Henry II, who became king in 1154 and claimed his right to the throne through his mother, Empress Matilda.

Edward's decision to fight for the French crown triggered the bloody Hundred Years' War that lasted for over a century, eventually ending in a French victory. The war left the ruling House of Plantagenet weakened in England and triggered a power struggle that led to the Wars of the Roses between the Houses of York and Lancaster – even after her death, Isabella had continued to shape English politics and history.



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children, was spared from Edward and the Despensers' wrath, much to Isabella's dismay.

The incident at Leeds Castle with Isabella had given Edward the justification he needed to go after his enemies. Yet instead of being rewarded, Isabella was further alienated from her husband. The younger Despenser did whatever he could to intervene in their relationship and limit Isabella's access to her husband, thereby weakening the possibility of her exercising any influence of her own. The queen despised and distrusted Despenser and by the end of 1322 she had chosen to live separately from her husband, leaving him with his favourite.

Relations between England and France reached another low in 1324 over Gascony, which belonged to Edward. As the Duke of Aquitaine, Edward was supposed to pay homage to King Charles IV, Isabella's brother, but he resisted. Frustrated, Charles declared that Edward had forfeited his lands and he seized Gascony.

Edward found himself in a difficult situation, as the tensions between the Despensers and the barons had once again worsened and he felt unable to leave the country amidst the instability. He responded to Charles' seizing his territory by arresting all of the French people who were living in England, treating them as unwelcome aliens in the country. Isabella, of course, was French and this gave Despenser the ammunition he needed to take her lands and arrest her household.

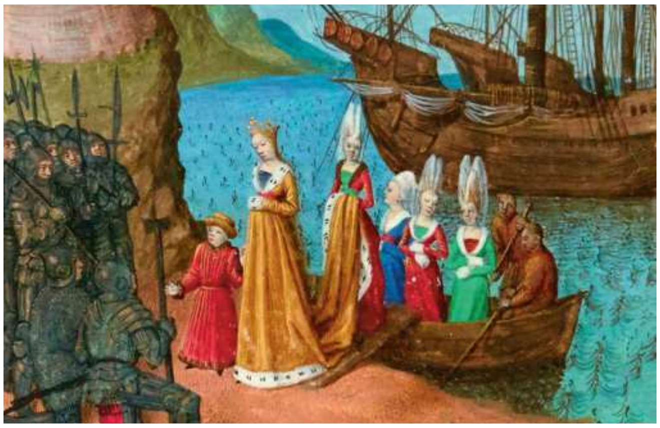
It is debated whether Edward and Despenser also removed Isabella's youngest children from her custody. While it was not unusual for royal children to be relocated with other noble families, the fact that it occurred amid tensions with France and that they were placed with the Despensers, whom Isabella hated, certainly means it was possible. Either way, Despenser had made his move against the queen and for Isabella there was no going back.

> "EDWARD'S REFUSAL TO BANISH DESPENSER WAS THE DEATH KNELL TO ANY CHANCE THAT THE KING AND QUEEN HAD OF RECONCILING"

With tensions between England and France reaching boiling point, Isabella was sent as an ambassador to the French court to negotiate with her brother. She was the ideal candidate, not only because she was the French king's sister but because she had served as an ambassador to France on several previous occasions. As she was the queen and a woman, Edward and Despenser were assured that she would obey them and remain loyal to their interests.

Arriving in Paris in March 1325, Isabella quickly secured a truce with Charles and she convinced Edward to send their son, Prince Edward, to France to pay homage to her brother. But the moment Prince Edward arrived on French soil, everything changed. Now that her son was within her control, Isabella finally had the power to negotiate with her husband and demand her rightful place by his side.

In a bold move, she publicly refused Edward's request for her to return to England with their son. Instead, she declared: "I feel that marriage is a union of a man and a woman, holding fast to the practice of a life together, and that someone has come between my husband and myself and is trying to break this bond. I declare that I will not return until this intruder is removed, but, discarding my marriage garment, shall put on the robes of widowhood and mourning until I am avenged of this Pharisee."



LEFT The queen returns to English shores accompanied by Prince Edward

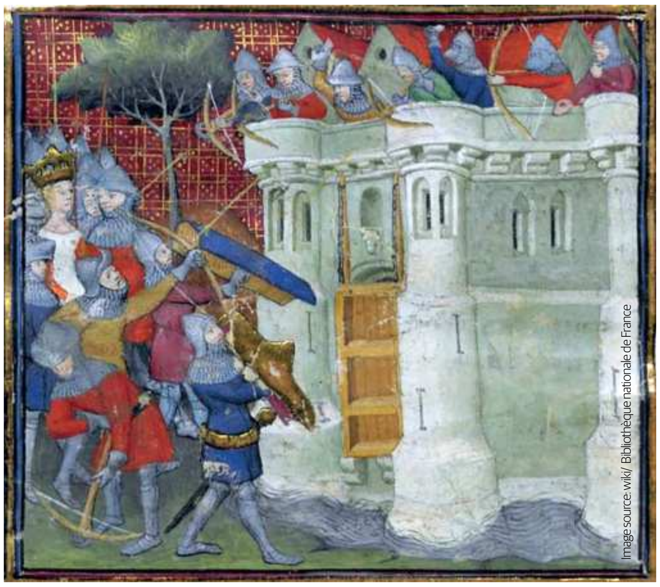
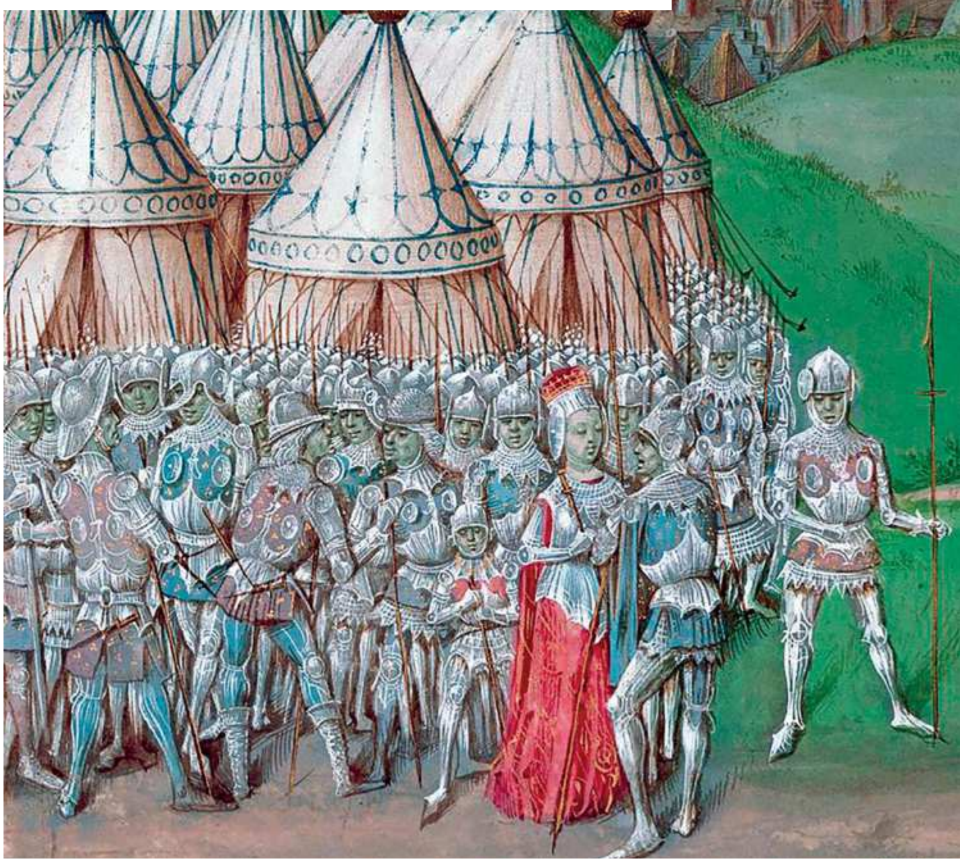


Image source: wiki/ Bibliothèque nationale de France

LEFT Isabella oversees the siege of Bristol on her return to England



BELOW A 14th-century depiction of Isabella in armour with her troops, with Despenser on the scaffold in the background

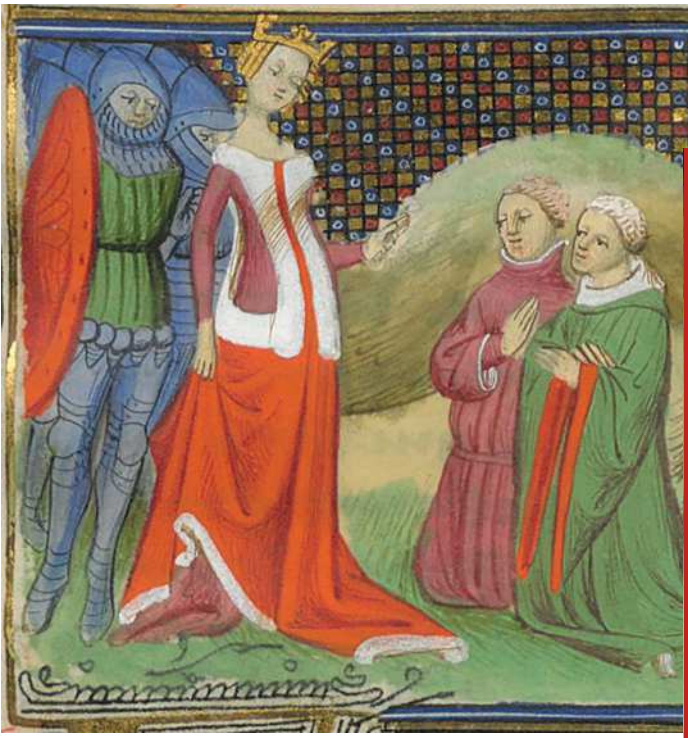
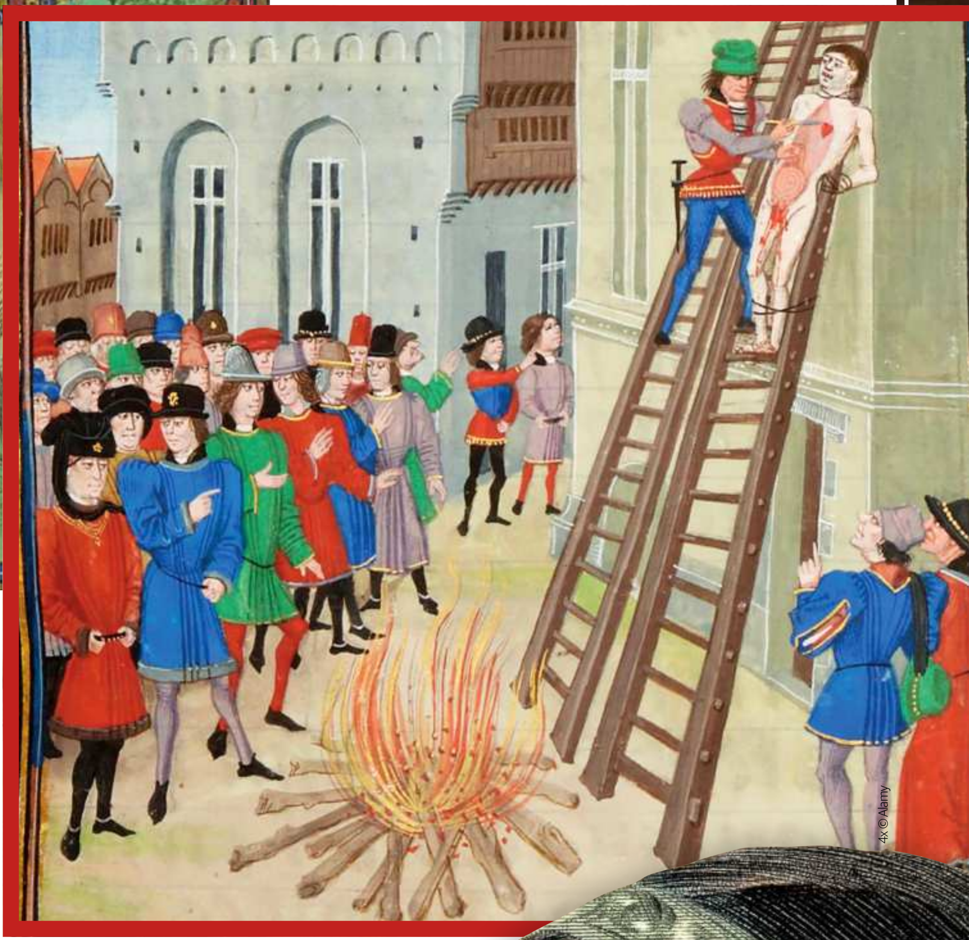


Image source: wiki/ visualiseur.bnf.fr

LEFT Edmund Fitzalan and Hugh Despenser kneel before Isabella

BELOW Illustration of Despenser's grisly death from *Froissart's Chronicles*

BOTTOM Isabella was a shrewd polticial actor as Queen of England



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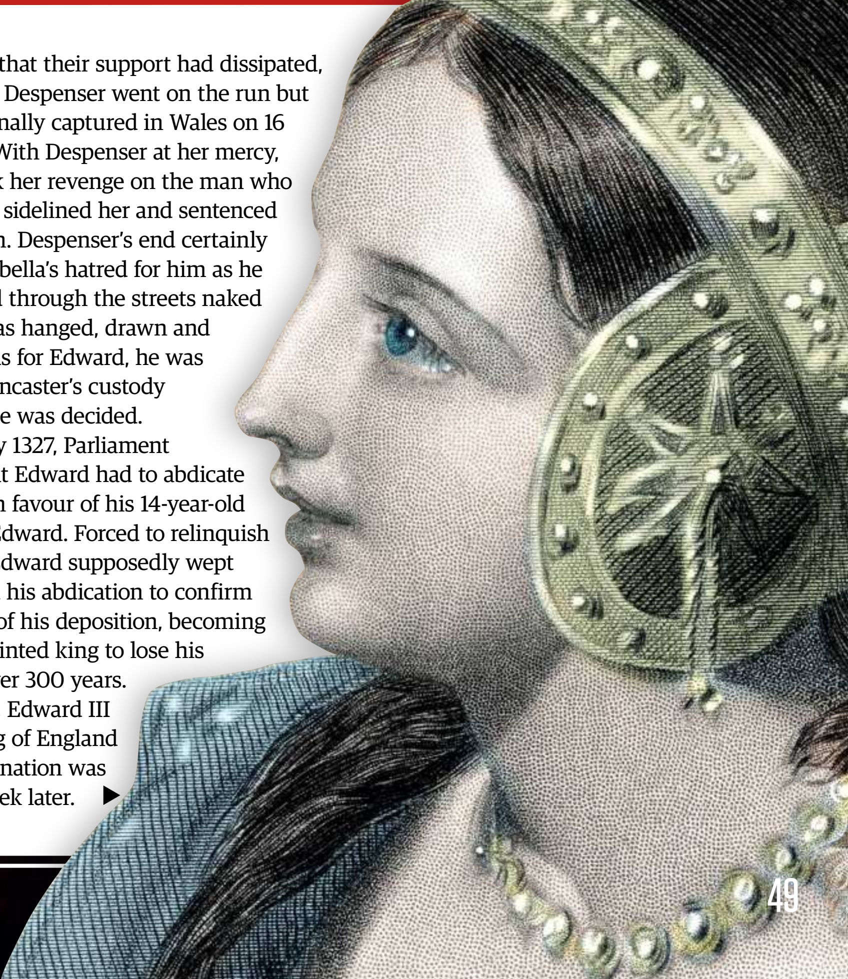


Isabella's speech, recorded in the chronicle *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, was clear – she wanted Despenser gone or she would not return. Unfortunately, Edward was by now so dependent on his favourite that he denied her request. His refusal to banish Despenser was the death knell to any chance that the king and queen had of reconciling.

Not only was Isabella openly estranged from her husband, but rumours swirled that she was engaging in an affair with a man named Roger Mortimer. A soldier and a politician who had openly rebelled against Edward, Mortimer had been imprisoned in the Tower of London in 1322 for his revolt, before he managed to escape and flee to France in exile with other rebels.

Did Isabella and Mortimer have an affair? Nobody knows for sure, with little evidence to prove or disprove their relationship. One clear thing, however, is that a partnership between them was mutually beneficial. Mortimer still opposed Edward's rule and he was capable of leading an invasion of English shores.

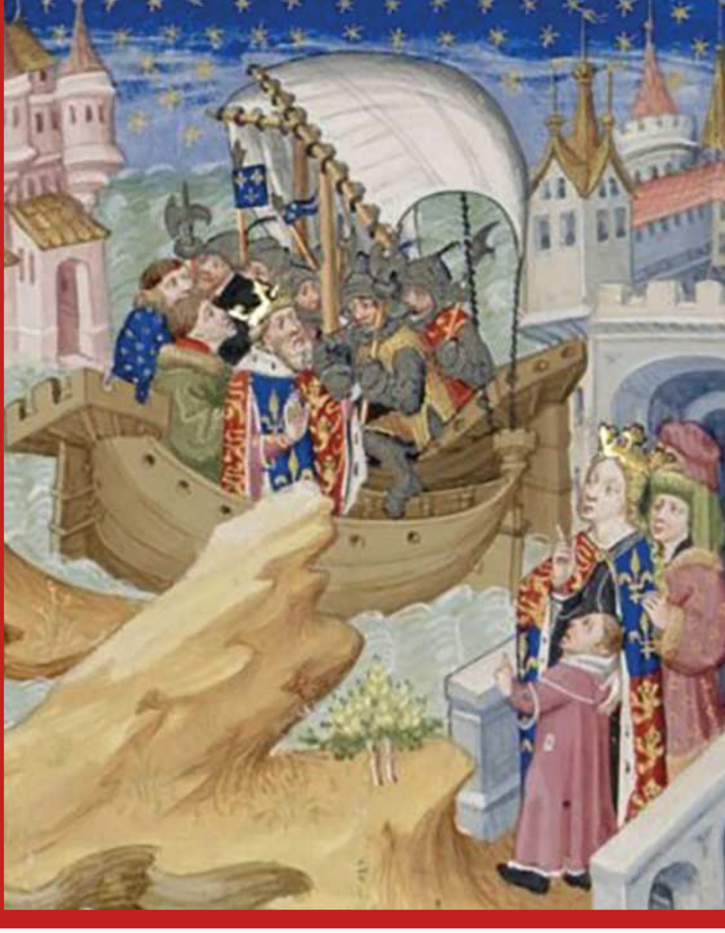
As for Isabella, since Edward would not rid himself of Despenser then she would, even if that meant deposing her husband in favour of their son. By positioning herself as a widow whose marriage had come to an end because of Despenser, Isabella had set the stage to justify both her decision to remain in France, under her brother's protection, and to remove an anointed king from his throne. Furthermore, the welfare and peace of the kingdom were at stake.

In a politically shrewd move, Isabella arranged for her son's betrothal to his second cousin, Philippa of Hainault. For his daughter's dowry, William, Count of Hainault, provided the troops and ships that were crucial for Isabella and Mortimer's plot to overthrow Edward. With their forces, Isabella and Mortimer set sail on 22 September 1326, landing in England two days later.

As Isabella, dressed in widow's clothes, and Mortimer progressed inland their supporters grew, buoyed by the promise that the queen would remove her tyrannous husband and install their son as the new king. Along the way, they were joined by the Earl of Norfolk and the Henry, Earl of Lancaster, the brother of the previous earl. The elder Despenser was captured during Isabella and Mortimer's siege of Bristol and later executed.

Realising that their support had dissipated, Edward and Despenser went on the run but they were finally captured in Wales on 16 November. With Despenser at her mercy, Isabella took her revenge on the man who had actively sidelined her and sentenced him to death. Despenser's end certainly reflected Isabella's hatred for him as he was dragged through the streets naked before he was hanged, drawn and quartered. As for Edward, he was placed in Lancaster's custody while his fate was decided.

In January 1327, Parliament declared that Edward had to abdicate his throne in favour of his 14-year-old son Prince Edward. Forced to relinquish his crown, Edward supposedly wept as he signed his abdication to confirm the legality of his deposition, becoming the first anointed king to lose his throne in over 300 years. On the 25th, Edward III became king of England and his coronation was held one week later. ▶



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ISABELLA THE MYTH

Cultural depictions of the queen have shaped her enduring legacy

In the centuries since her death, Isabella has frequently been portrayed as a conniving and greedy Jezebel who used her feminine wiles to betray her king and country. Even though Edward was an incompetent ruler and his deposition was welcomed by many, his mysterious death led to speculation that he had been murdered. The idea that a king had been unlawfully killed, perhaps on the orders of his wife, turned Edward into something of a martyr over time, while Isabella became a villain.

So entwined are certain myths about Isabella, coupled with a tantalising lack of evidence, that it is difficult to know the truth. In his poem, *The Curse Upon Edward*, 18th-century poet Thomas Gray notably referred to Isabella as the, "She-wolf of France, with unrelenting fangs/That tear'st the bowels of thy mangled mate." Gray's mention of Edward's bowels likely refers to the legend that Edward was killed by a red-hot poker shoved up his anus, that scorched his intestines and burnt him from the inside out. There is no evidence to suggest this is true and yet it is still widely repeated. Of course, Isabella is the one who is accused of ordering such a cruel and gruesome death.

Even the more sympathetic portrayals of Isabella are full of inaccuracies. The 1995 film *Braveheart* (below) depicts a neglected Isabella having an affair with William Wallace, one of the main leaders during the First War of Scottish Independence. It is implied that she fell pregnant with her son, the future Edward III, as a result of this affair and thereby ending the Plantagenet line of kings. In reality, Isabella was only around 10 years old and still living in France when Wallace was executed in 1305, and her son was not the product of an adulterous relationship.

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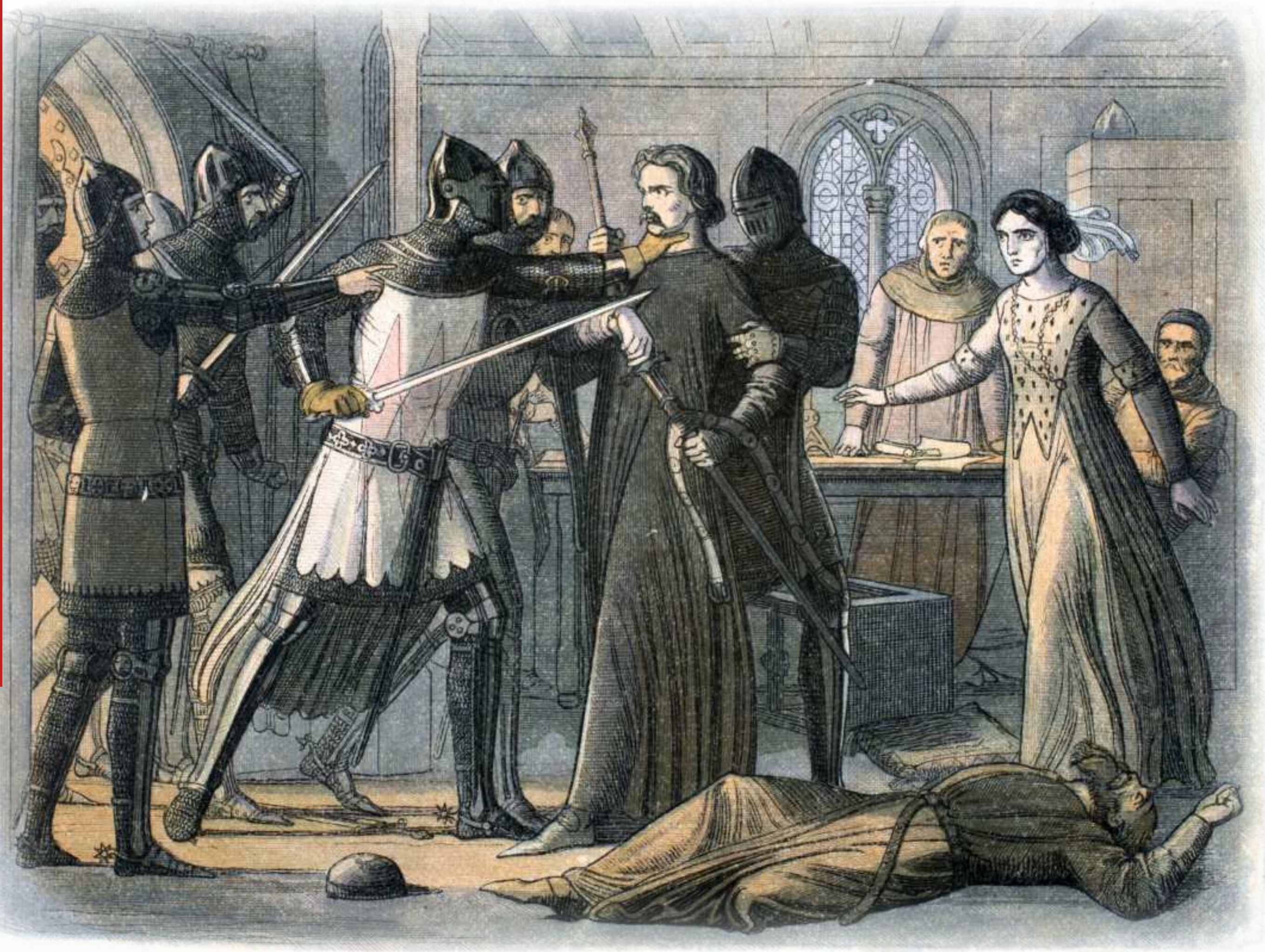
Since the new king was still a minor, he needed a regency council to run the country on his behalf until he could assume his personal rule. Although Isabella and Mortimer were not members of the regency council, they were controlling it behind the scenes as the ones wielding the real power.

Meanwhile, Edward II – who had remained in custody ever since his forced abdication – died at Berkeley Castle in Gloucestershire on 21 September 1327. While he was alive, he remained a very real threat to the new regime and there had been several failed attempts to rescue him from his imprisonment. Even so, whether Isabella or Mortimer ordered his death cannot be said for certain and this is still debated today. Another theory suggests that Edward may have escaped in disguise and fled to Europe.

Isabella and Mortimer had succeeded in their goal to remove a disastrous and inept king. But, in an ironic twist, they began indulging in the same behaviour that Edward and Despenser had been loathed for. With their new power, they began awarding themselves lands and accumulating wealth from the royal treasury to fund their extravagant lifestyle.

Aside from the lavish spending, Isabella and Mortimer became unpopular for reaching a peace agreement with Scotland. The wars with Scotland during Edward II's reign had been both costly



OPPOSITE-TOP The arrest of Edward II depicted in miniature

OPPOSITE-BOTTOM King Edward II died while imprisoned at Berkeley Castle

LEFT Mortimer is arrested at Nottingham Castle by Edward III's men

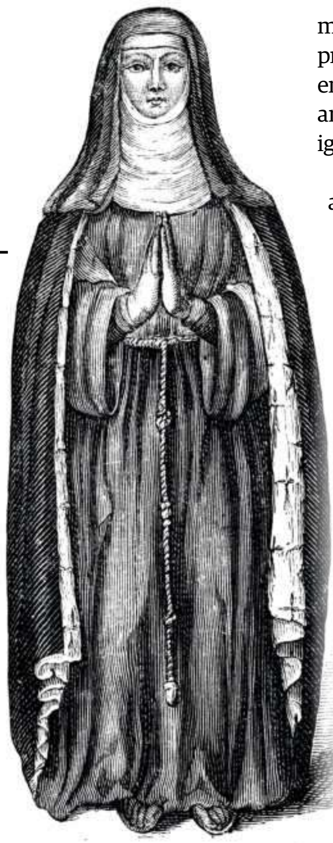
BELOW Isabella became a nun shortly before she died in 1358

> "IN AN IRONIC TWIST, ISABELLA AND MORTIMER BEGAN INDULGING IN THE SAME BEHAVIOUR THAT EDWARD AND DESPENSER HAD BEEN LOATHED FOR"

and unsuccessful and Isabella wanted to bring the conflict to an end. The Treaty of Northampton, signed in 1328, recognised Robert the Bruce as king of Scotland as well as Scotland's independence.

While concluding a war peacefully would usually be seen as a diplomatic triumph, Isabella and Mortimer's agreement with Scotland caused outrage in England, with the nobles considering it shameful and humiliating. Isabella, who had been hailed by some as a heroine who had saved the nation from her husband, found herself subject to the very same hatred that had once been directed at him.

Edward III himself had become increasingly frustrated with his mother and Mortimer's continued hold on power. He had married Philippa in 1328 and in June 1330 she had given birth to their first child and son, Edward of Woodstock. Now 17 and with his own heir, Edward III was ready to take control of his kingdom.



Realising that her son was turning against her, Isabella moved to Nottingham Castle with Mortimer and their men for protection. However, on 19 October Edward's troops successfully entered the castle through a secret tunnel and Mortimer was arrested. After just four years, Isabella's regency had come to an ignominious end.

Mortimer was hanged at Tyburn for the murder of Edward II, as well as usurping the king's power. Isabella was spared the same fate and instead she was placed under house arrest and forced to give up all the lands and money that she had granted herself during the regency. However, she was not kept in custody for long.

Although she had lost her grip on power and never entered the political arena again, Isabella was able to retire in comfort and she lived luxuriously, spending much of her time at Castle Rising in Norfolk. Remaining an influential figure at the English court, her son even provided her with an annual income of £3000, which was later increased to £4500. Isabella died at Hertford Castle on 22 August 1358 and was buried in Newgate.

There is no denying that Isabella was and remains a controversial figure. Her rebellion against Edward II, the mysterious circumstances surrounding his death as well as her short time as regent have all tainted her reputation, turning her into a traitor. While Isabella was far from perfect and she made mistakes, it is worth remembering that she was also a formidable woman whose bravery changed the course of English history forever.

CHINA'S SHADOW EMPRESS

The extraordinary tale of Empress Dowager Cixi, the teenage concubine who rose to become the most powerful woman in China

Written by Jessica Leggett

Empress Dowager Cixi is unquestionably one of the most formidable and divisive figures in Chinese history. Cixi, a contemporary of Queen Victoria, was only the second woman to rule China after Empress Wu Zetian in the 7th century. So how did Cixi, the Emperor's lowly mistress, become the ruler of nearly a third of the world's population?

Cixi was born in Beijing on 29 November 1835. She was from a Manchu family, the ruling ethnic minority in China, and it is thought that her relatives were government employees. As a Manchu girl, she was spared the fate of having her feet bound, a practice that was performed on Han Chinese girls.

Unfortunately, little is known about Cixi's life prior to her entering the imperial court, although it is believed that she was taught how to read and write a little as well as sew. It's also been argued that her father would frequently seek her advice and valued her opinion just as much as a son's.

When she was 16 years old, Cixi was chosen as a concubine for the Qing dynasty's Xianfeng Emperor, who was four years her senior. With hundreds of candidates, being chosen was a great honour, and Cixi arrived in the Forbidden City in June 1852 to join the imperial harem. The harem had eight ranks and Cixi was placed in the sixth rank of 'Noble Lady' and so she was given the name 'Noble Lady Lan'.

Cixi was a low-ranking concubine in the harem, but everything changed when she gave birth to Xiafeng's firstborn son, Zaichun, on 27 April 1856. His birth was met with widespread celebration and Cixi became the second most powerful woman in the harem. She was given the title of 'Noble Consort Yi', after succeeding where the Emperor's other concubines and his primary consort, Empress Ci'an, had failed.

Even though Ci'an remained childless, Zaichun was officially considered her son and she was in charge of his upbringing rather than his biological mother, Cixi. Despite this, there was no tension as the two women got on well and they became close friends.

While Cixi had been rising through the ranks, China was in turmoil. The Taiping Rebellion, a bloody uprising against

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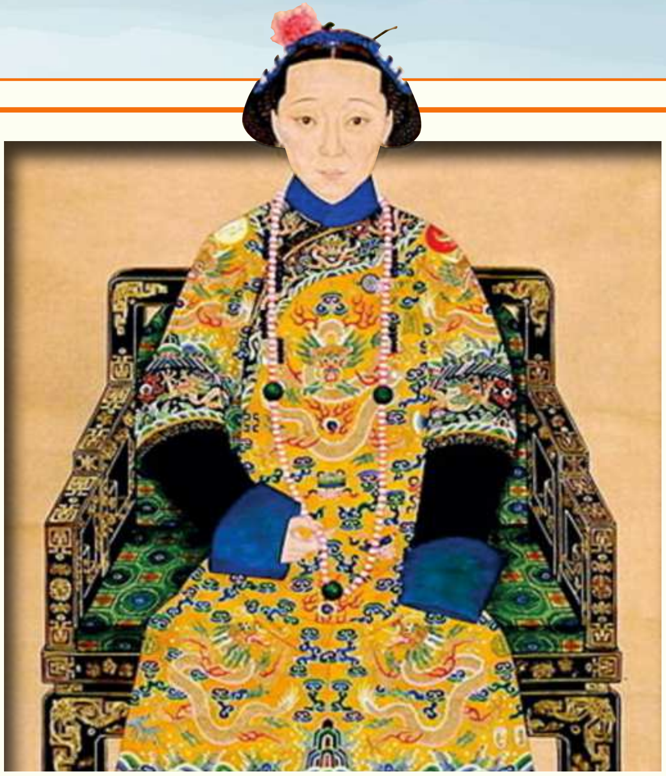


ABOVE-LEFT Empress Dowager Ci'an was Cixi's co-regent for two decades

ABOVE-RIGHT Cixi joined the Imperial Palace as a 16-year-old concubine

the Qing dynasty, had started in 1850 – two years before Cixi became a concubine – and it was still going strong. To make matters worse, China was also fighting the British and French empires in the Second Opium War, which erupted just under six months after Zaichun's birth.

China was losing the war, and by August 1860 the combined British and French forces were marching towards Beijing. Xianfeng dispatched envoys to conduct peace talks, but the meeting resulted in the arrest and torture of the British envoy, Harry Parkes, and his men by the Qing. In retaliation, Lord Elgin, who was leading the British Army, ordered the looting and burning of the Old Summer Palace. By this point, Xianfeng, Cixi and the rest of the imperial household had already fled Beijing.

Xianfeng's health had been deteriorating for some time, and in desperation after the Beijing attack, he turned to alcohol and drugs. On 22 August 1861, he died, leaving a five-year-old son to succeed him as Emperor. Before his death, Xianfeng had arranged for eight regents to act on Zaichun's behalf until he was old enough to rule alone.

Following the death of their husband, Cixi and Ci'an were both given the title of 'Empress Dowager', and it was from this point on that Cixi became known as 'Empress Dowager Cixi'. Meanwhile, after ascending the imperial throne, her son Zaichun became known as the Tongzhi Emperor.

Soon enough, tensions between the Empresses Dowager and the regents were quickly escalating at court. As her husband's health had declined, Cixi became more involved in the court's political life. Yet the regents were uninterested in listening to a woman and chose to ignore her, which irritated Cixi. While Ci'an had no taste for politics, she was annoyed by the frequent confrontations with the regents and she often refused to attend court audiences, leaving Cixi to face them alone.

Cixi suggested to Ci'an that they oust the regents and take over the regency themselves, reigning together as co-regents. It was a risky scheme and the women knew that they would need powerful, male allies if they wanted to succeed. Cixi immediately began rallying support for their coup, including Xianfeng's half-brothers, Princes Gong and Chun. Gong, in particular, had ambitions for power and had been annoyed by the regents sidelining him.

In November, Cixi accused the regents of incompetency for their handling of the negotiations with Britain and France in the aftermath of the invasion of Beijing. The regents were dismissed and arrested for treason, with three of them sentenced to death by linchi, also known as 'death by a thousand cuts', a slow and painful way to die. Cixi, however, reduced these sentences in an act of so-called mercy, having the leading regent decapitated while the other two men were encouraged to commit suicide.

Cixi and Ci'an had successfully seized power at the ages of 25 and 24 respectively in what became known as the Xinyou Coup. Assuming the reins of the regency, it was announced that the two women would be in charge of making decisions, and they formed an effective partnership. Ci'an handled administrative matters such as official appointments, while Cixi revelled in politics and policy formation.

> "CI'AN HANDLED ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS SUCH AS OFFICIAL APPOINTMENTS, WHILE CIXI REVELLED IN POLITICS AND POLICY FORMATION"

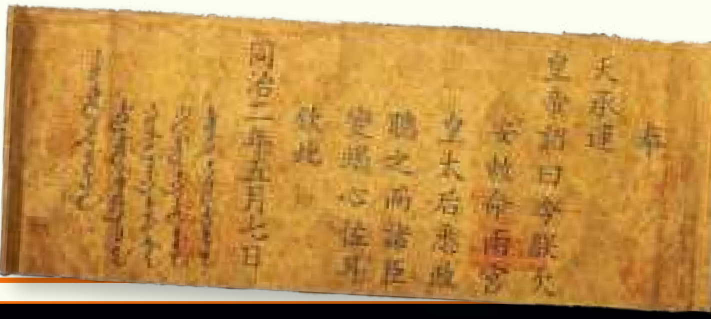
However, according to the ancient court laws, women could not attend imperial audiences nor speak with a man face to face. Consequently, Cixi had to sit behind the young emperor on the throne and she was obscured by a screen, a practice that became known as to 'rule from behind the curtain'.

Prince Gong, who had been appointed as Tongzhi's Prince Counselor, backed the Empresses Dowager along with the Grand Council. But Cixi was the one who wielded the real power, as she demonstrated in 1865 when she stripped Gong of his title, fearing that he was becoming too powerful – she couldn't risk her power being usurped by someone else.

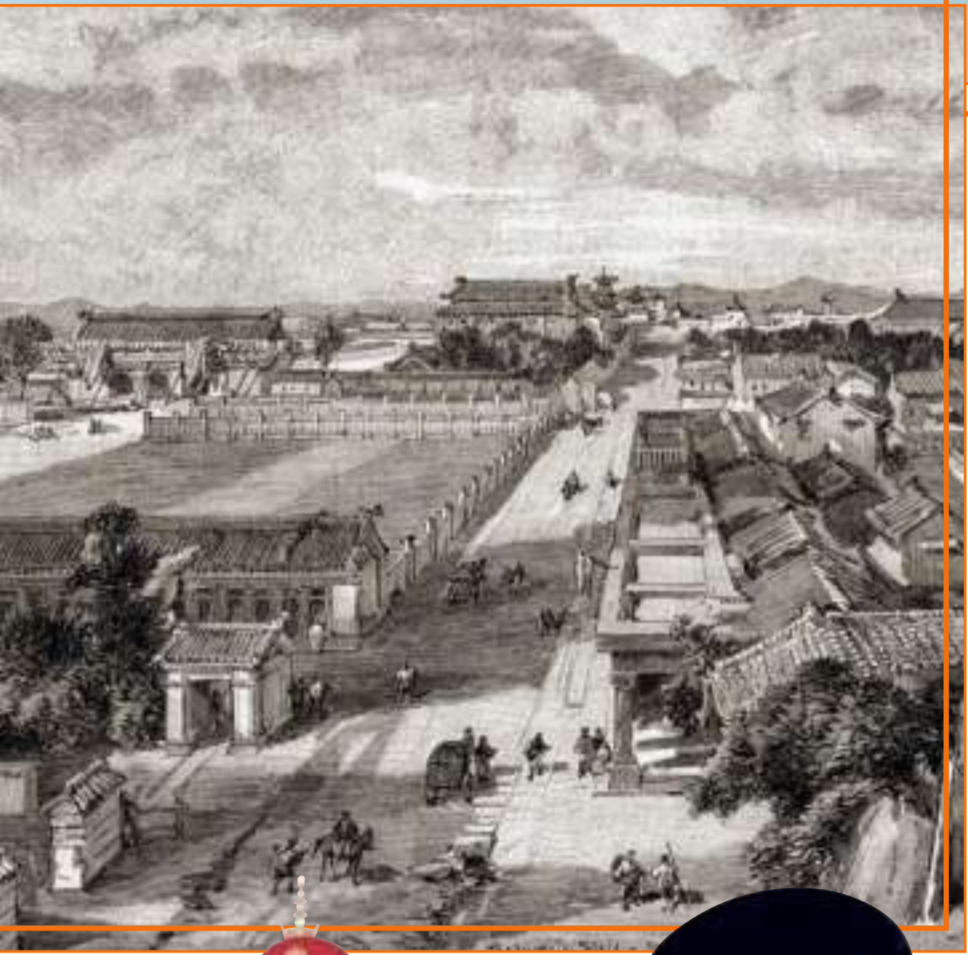
During the first few years of Cixi's regency, China experienced a period of revitalisation known as the Tongzhi Restoration. Despite her conservative views, Cixi recognised the need for China to modernise, and she looked to the West for both knowledge and trade opportunities, for which she established a customs service. Cixi also sought out people who would support rather than oppose her policies, making an effort to combat government corruption and maintain stability. It was during this time that the Taiping Rebellion was finally put down after 14 years.

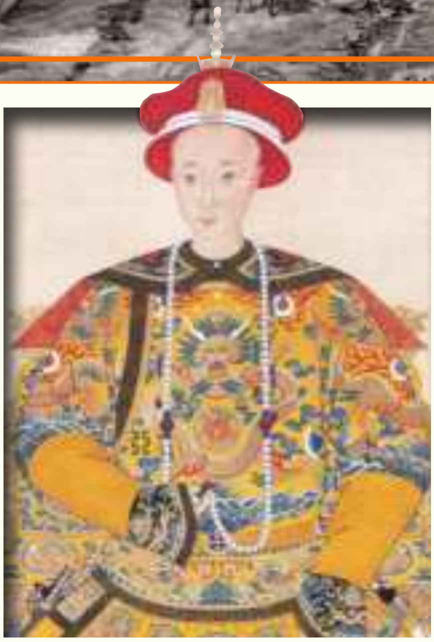
Tongzhi married the Jiashun Empress in 1872 when he was 16 years old. While Ci'an approved of the bride, Cixi was opposed to the marriage because Jiashun's grandfather was one of the eight regents who had been deposed over a decade before. As Tongzhi failed to spend time with his concubines, Cixi grew more resentful of Jianshun, believing that the young couple were not dedicated enough to learn how to rule China.

Cixi, frustrated, eventually forced the couple to separate. Tongzhi, distraught and lonely, supposedly sought solace outside of the palace by frequenting brothels. He died in 1875, and while the official cause of death was smallpox, it was widely assumed



BELOW In 1863, Tongzhi issued a decree ordering the ministries to fully support the Empress Dowagers while he was ill





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ABOVE-LEFT Cixi acted as regent on behalf of her son, the Tongzhi Emperor

ABOVE-RIGHT Prince Gong was an ambitious man and a powerful ally of Cixi's

that he contracted syphilis from visiting prostitutes. Since the Emperor had no children, Tongzhi's death caused a succession crisis. Tongzhi's four-year-old cousin, Zaitain, was chosen by Cixi to become the new Emperor. The young boy was the son of Prince Chun and Wanzhen, Cixi's younger sister, and after ascending the throne, he was known as the Guangxu Emperor. Guangxu was subsequently adopted by Cixi and Ci'an, who remained in their roles as regents.

The joint rule of Cixi and Ci'an had provided the stability that allowed China to begin its modernisation process. However, Ci'an's sudden death in April 1881 put an end to their partnership after two decades of working together. Cixi was suspected of poisoning her fellow Empress Dowager, but this has never been proven.

Guangxu married Jingfen, Cixi's niece, in 1889. Cixi announced her retirement from the regency and handing power over to the

THE TAIPING REBELLION

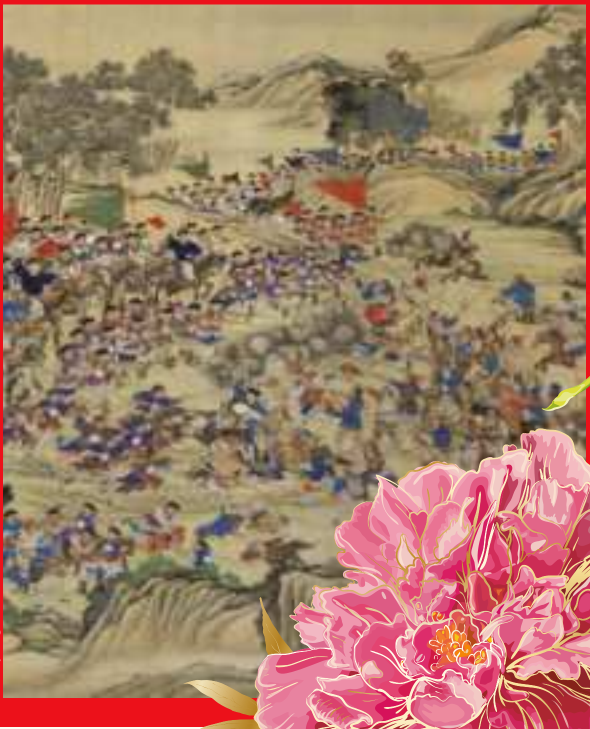
One of the bloodiest civil wars in history

The Taiping Rebellion was one of the most violent and important events in the history of China. It was led by Hong Xiuquan, an ethnic Hakka, who had failed the civil service exam several times. After falling sick, he claimed to have a number of visions of heaven and believed that he was the son of God and the younger brother of Jesus Christ, and that it was his duty to overthrow the Manchu Qing dynasty and reform China.

Hong began preaching his ideas across the province of Guangxi and his friend and follower, Feng Yunshan, founded a new religious group, the God Worshippers' Society, which particularly attracted peasants who were suffering from famine. Hong joined the God Worshippers himself and the Society expanded, with Hong eventually referring to himself as 'The Taiping King.'

In 1850, the Society declared the formation of the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom, marking the beginning of the rebellion, which eventually spread across the lower and central Yangtze region. Three years later, the rebels successfully captured the city of Nanjing, which they established as the new Taiping capital. Next, The Taiping rebels set their sights on capturing Beijing, but they did not succeed.

In 1864, Hong was found dead and it remains unclear whether he committed suicide or was murdered. A month later, Nanjing was eventually captured by Qing forces after 11 years of Taiping occupation. Ultimately, the Taiping Rebellion resulted in the deaths of – at least – an estimated 20 million people. Even though the Qing dynasty won, it was left extremely weakened by the rebellion and it is considered a factor in the dynasty's collapse less than five decades later.



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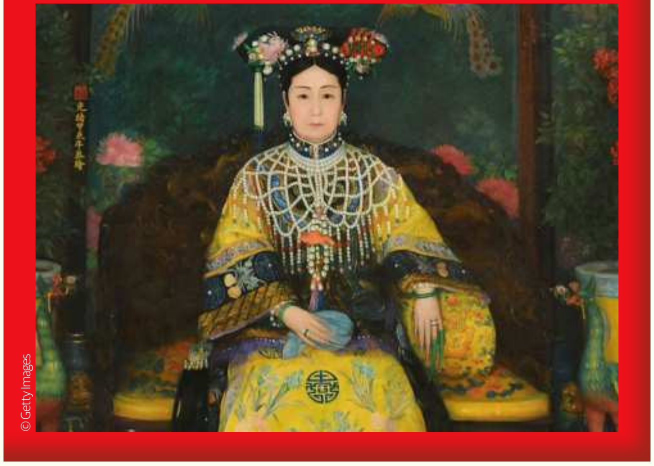
REHABILITATING CIXI

The Empress Dowager went on a propaganda campaign of her own

Cixi's reputation was severely tarnished after the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, both in China and around the world. Foreign visitors were invited to receptions at the palace in an attempt to improve her image. After her return to Beijing, she even invited the wives of foreign diplomats – whose lives had been threatened by the violent Boxers she had encouraged – to tea at the Forbidden City.

Between 1903 and 1904, a young photographer named Xunling was invited to take a series of staged photographic portraits of Cixi and her court, with the Empress Dowager becoming one of the first in the imperial court to engage with photography. These photos, which are the only ones of Cixi that exist, were rich in symbolism, emphasising her imperial authority and earning her the moniker 'the dragon lady'. These photographs, some of which were given as diplomatic gifts, show Cixi's face to the world and provide a rare glimpse into the imperial court.

In 1903, Sarah Conger, wife of the US ambassador to China, persuaded Cixi to have her portrait painted by American artist Katharine A Carl for the 1904 St. Louis World Fair. Carl spent nine months in the Forbidden City while she painted the Empress Dowager, creating one of the most famous images of Cixi. President Theodore Roosevelt later received the portrait from Cixi as a gift and he donated it to the Smithsonian Institution.



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Emperor, now that Guangxu was 17 and married. She retired to the new Summer Palace, which she had rebuilt following the destruction of the old one.

Disaster struck just a few years into Guangxu's personal rule. The First Sino-Japanese War erupted in July 1894 between Japan and China, primarily over the Korean Peninsula. While Cixi had developed the Chinese navy during her regency, Guangxu had halted naval and military development and maintenance. With a navy that was no match for the Japanese fleet, the Qing government was, unsurprisingly, defeated.

Guangxu and his government sought peace with Japan in February 1895, and the Treaty of Shimonoseki was signed two months later. China was required to pay Japan substantial war reparations and cede territory, including Taiwan, as part of the terms.

Guangxu believed that if the Qing dynasty was to survive, drastic reform was required following China's humiliating defeat and concessions to Japan. Under the influence of reformist Kang Youwei and his student, Liang Qichao, he began the Hundred Days' Reform in 1898. Guangxu issued numerous reform edicts aimed at modernising every aspect of Chinese society. Among these reforms, he wanted to abolish the old civil examination system and develop a constitutional monarchy, like those seen in Japan and the West.

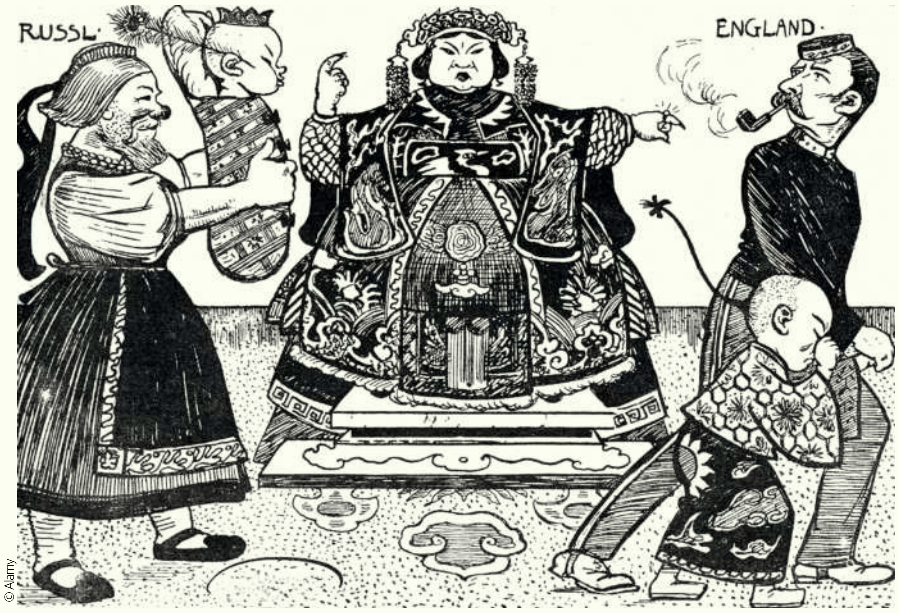
Guangxu hoped to safeguard China's future, but his desire for broad reform enraged conservative officials, including Cixi. She staged a coup in September, putting Guangxu under house arrest at the Summer Palace and regaining control of the regency. Although Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao were able to flee abroad, Cixi arrested and executed six of their fellow reformers for their role in the Hundred Days' Reform.

It is often stated that Cixi imprisoned Guangxu permanently following the coup. Despite the fact that Cixi was in power, Guangxu kept his title of Emperor and continued to play a role in government. According to letters from officials and foreign diplomats, he attended court audiences and even made personal comments on memorials to the throne, the official communication to the Emperor.

Much of what has been circulated about Cixi over the last century or so, shaping her narrative, has been the result of Kang's

ABOVE The Boxer Rebellion significantly damaged Cixi's reputation

BELOW A German caricature depicting Cixi deposing the Guangxu Emperor



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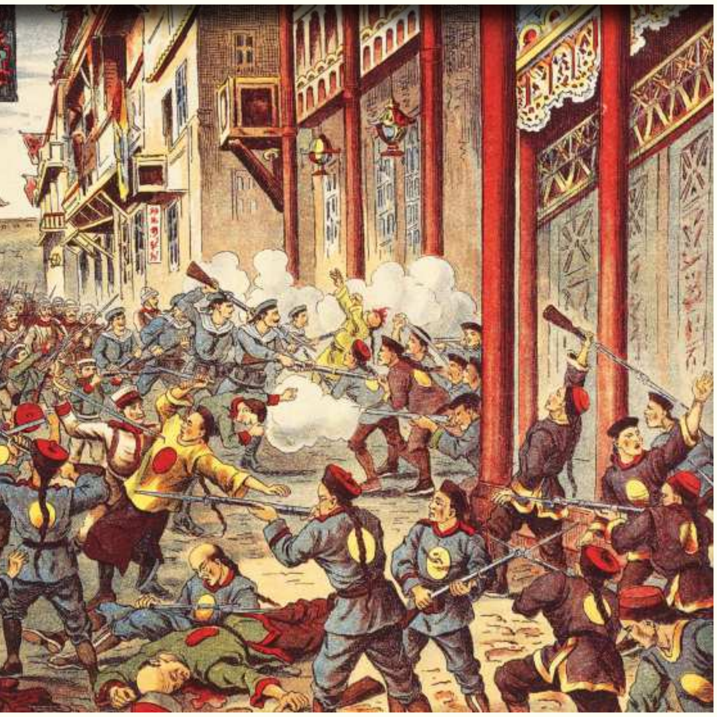
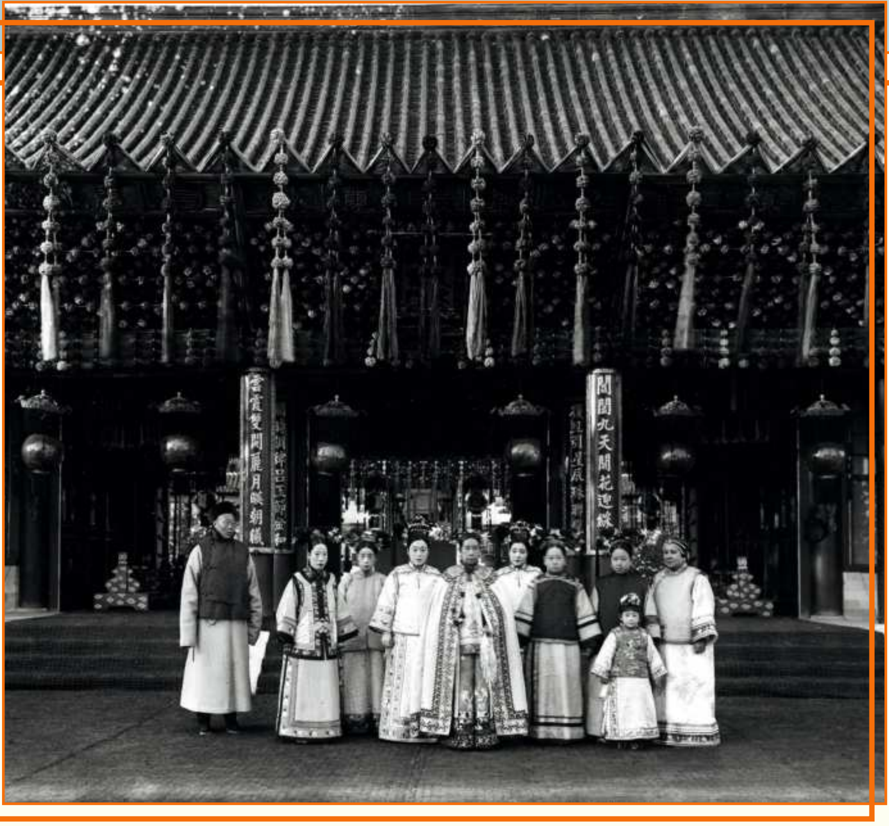




ABOVE A photograph of Empress Dowager Cixi and her court

> "Cixi's decision to accept reform, however, appears to have come too late"

propaganda. While in exile, he claimed that Guangxu had asked for help in securing his freedom and that Cixi would try to kill the Emperor, portraying himself as a heroic reformer forced out by the Empress Dowager. He also claimed that Cixi used funds from the Chinese navy to build her new summer palace, depriving the navy of the money it required to develop, resulting in China's defeat at the hands of Japan.

But Cixi had more pressing concerns than Kang's writings from abroad. The Boxer Rebellion erupted in November 1899, with rebels violently attacking foreign diplomats, missionaries, and Chinese Christians. Known as the Boxers, the rebels were members of a secret society, the 'Society of Righteous and Harmonious Fists', who initially opposed the Qing dynasty before focusing their vitriol towards foreigners. Cixi, seeing this as an opportunity to rid China of foreign interference, openly announced her support for them.

Cixi's support for the Boxers, predictably, led to an increase in their violent attacks. To put down the rebellion, the Eight-Nation Alliance - which included Britain, France, and Japan - occupied Beijing in August 1900. Cixi was forced to flee the city with the Emperor to Xi'an, where she stayed for the next 18 months.

After negotiations, the rebellion came to an end in 1901, with China being forced to pay a large indemnity to the foreigners for the revolt. Cixi even decided to issue an uncharacteristic 'decree of self-reproach' in which she accepted responsibility for the rebellion and blamed her poor judgement for it.

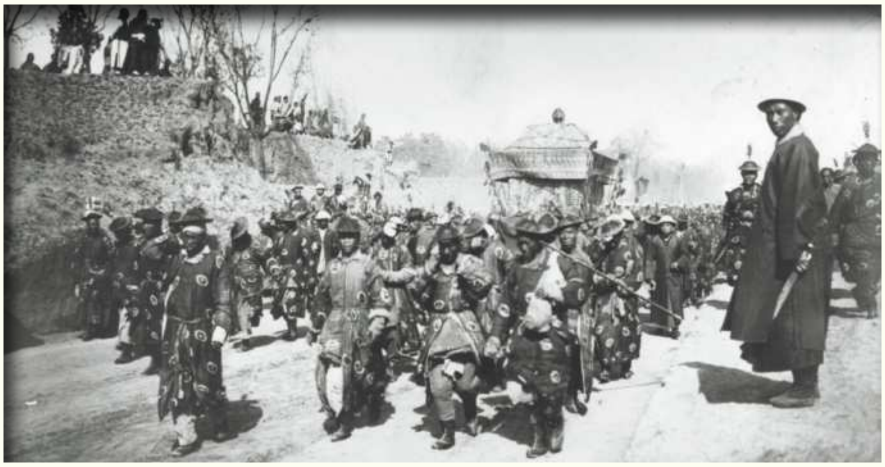
Cixi realised that China needed serious reform when she returned to Beijing in 1902. She began implementing a number of the reforms that she had stopped four years earlier with her coup. She abolished the examination system, abolished torturous punishments such as linchi, outlawed the practice of foot-binding, and worked to improve girls' education. Cixi even began issuing reforms to establish elected assemblies and move towards a constitutional monarchy.

Cixi died on November 15, 1908, just one day after Guangxu, after ruling China for nearly five decades. Guangxu had no children but Cixi had not trained anyone to succeed her, because she did not want to risk losing the power and influence that she had worked so hard to achieve. Cixi chose two-year-old Puyi, Guangxu's half-nephew, to succeed as Emperor shortly before her own death.

Cixi's decision to accept reform, however, appears to have come too late. Three years later, the Qing Dynasty fell apart, and Puyi was forced to abdicate in 1912, ending two thousand years of imperial rule in China.

Cixi's story is mysterious and speculative in many ways. Although revisionists have praised her efforts to modernise, she has been repeatedly vilified and subjected to damaging propaganda that blames her for Imperial China's demise. While Cixi had her detractors both during and after her lifetime, she was undeniably a powerful woman and a force to be reckoned with. ○

BELOW The funeral procession for Cixi in 1908



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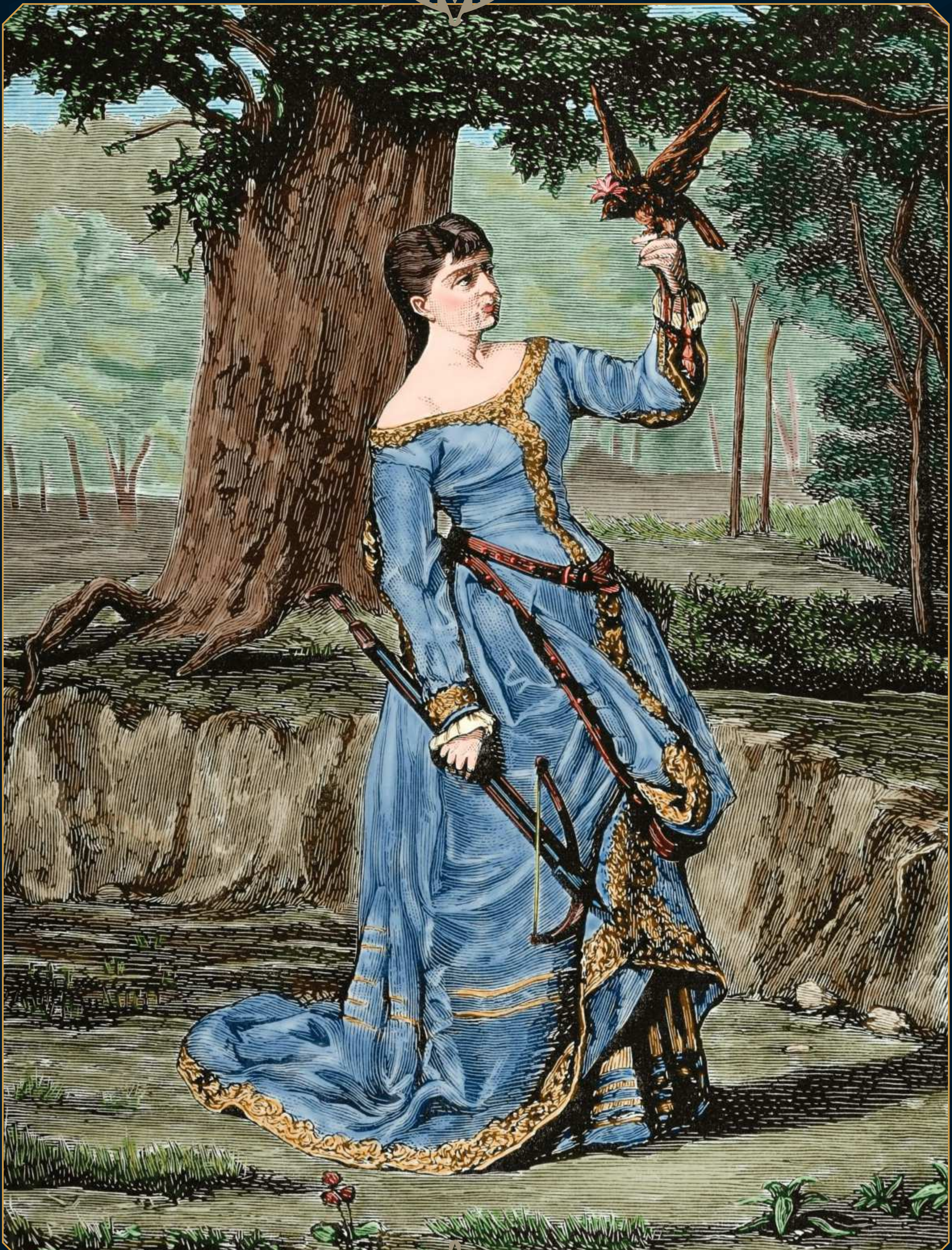

EMPRESS MATILDA

LOST QUEEN OF ENGLAND

How the formidable empress fought tooth and nail for her rightful place on the English throne

Written by Emily Staniforth

Empress Matilda was a major political player of the 12th century. Heir to the throne, granddaughter of William the Conqueror and Malcolm III of Scotland and adversary of King Stephen, she led a remarkable life for a medieval woman. Her resolve to rightfully claim the throne of England by any means necessary, casting aside the expectations of her sex, made her an intimidating opponent who would stop at nothing to achieve her aim. But what is her story? As the almost-queen of England, the tale of her life has been somewhat lost, overshadowed by the success of her descendants.

Matilda was born in February 1102 in a small village in Oxfordshire. The first child of King Henry I of England, Duke of Normandy, and his wife Edith-Matilda of Scotland, Matilda was a true princess. Royal blood ran through her veins. Unfortunately, being born a girl meant that she was highly unlikely to inherit the throne of England. Those odds became slimmer with the birth of her younger brother and heir to throne, William Adelin, in 1103.

The direction of Matilda's life was decided for her in 1109 when, like many royal daughters, she was betrothed to a man for her family's political gain. The man in question was the extremely powerful Emperor Henry V, who ruled over the area of Europe that later became known as the Holy Roman Empire. At the time of their betrothal, Emperor Henry was 23 years old and Matilda was seven. A large dowry was paid by King Henry to the emperor for his marriage to Matilda, and in return the king gained the prestige of an alliance with one of the most influential men in Europe.

Despite not yet being married to the emperor, Matilda was sent to live at the German court at the age of eight. Being thrown into an unfamiliar environment would be daunting for anyone, but Matilda appears to have thrived in her new surroundings. She was educated to an exceptionally high standard, becoming fluent in three languages and knowledgeable of politics and international relations. The emperor had been clear in his intentions to follow the German custom of finding not just a wife but a skilled and capable consort. Matilda certainly did not disappoint.

Just before her 12th birthday, Matilda was married to Emperor Henry in a lavish ceremony at Worms, and in 1116 she and Henry headed to Rome for Matilda's coronation as empress. After the ceremony, the emperor returned to Germany, leaving his new empress to rule over Italy in his name. As a teenager, Matilda had her first taste of successful independent rule.

In 1120, a maritime disaster changed the course of Matilda's life. The sinking of the White Ship in the English Channel resulted in the deaths of approximately 300 people, including Matilda's brother and

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EXPERT BIO

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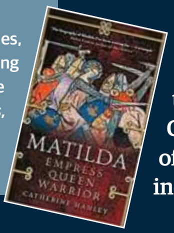
CATHERINE HANLEY

Dr Catherine Hanley is a historian of Medieval Studies, specialising in warfare during the Middle Ages. She is the author of *Matilda: Empress, Queen, Warrior* (Yale University Press, 2019).



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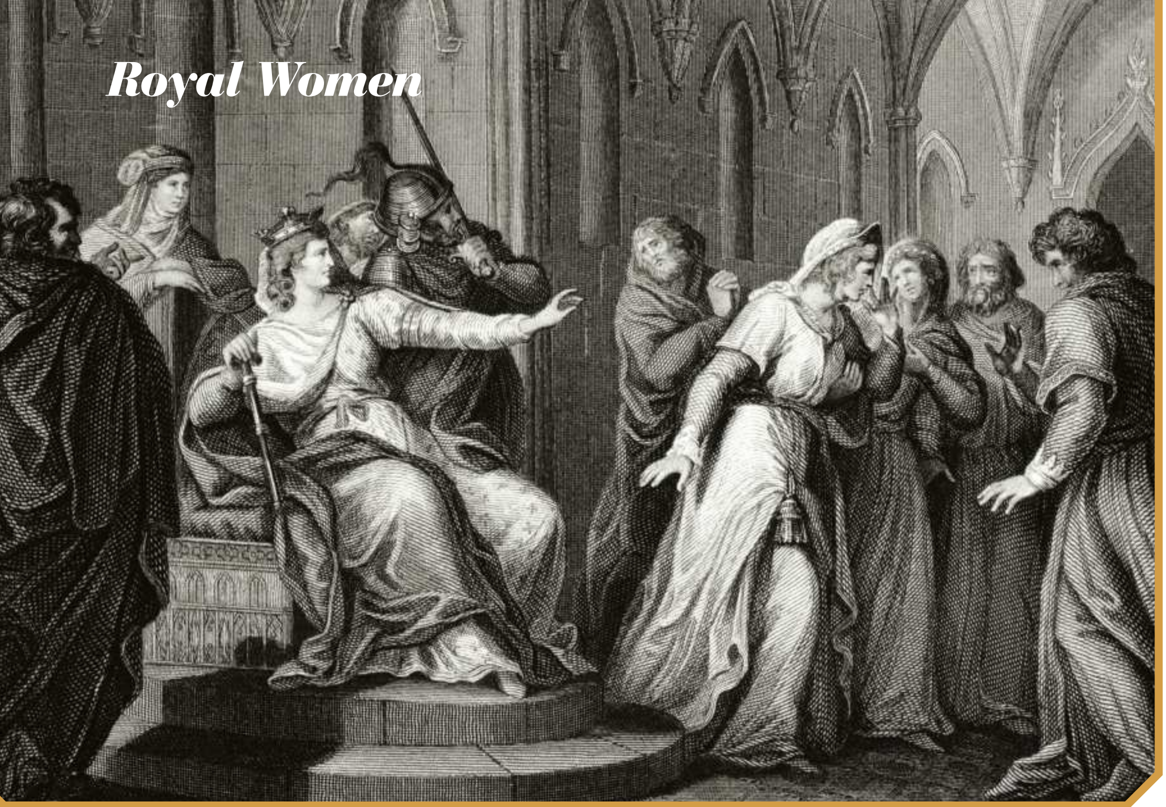


ABOVE This engraving shows Empress Matilda turning away Matilda of Boulogne, who is pleading for her husband's release. The event never happened and the image is designed to vilify Matilda

RIGHT The wedding feast of Matilda and Emperor Henry V depicted in the *Cronica Francorum*

FAR-RIGHT Stephen was captured by Matilda's forces at the Battle of Lincoln

heir to the English throne, William Adelin. William was the only legitimate son of Henry I. King Henry, whose wife, Queen Edith, had died two years previously, remarried in an attempt to father a legitimate son. Unfortunately, the king and his new queen, Adeliza of Louvain, did not have any children.

To make matters worse, in 1125 Emperor Henry V died of cancer. Matilda was left a widow at the age of 23, and went back to England in 1126 to rejoin her father's court. King Henry had realised that he had few options available to him when appointing his heir. If he chose his nephew, William Clito, his position as king would have been untenable as Clito's father, Robert Curthose, was Henry's elder brother who had been passed over by William I. The selection of Clito as heir would have raised questions as to why Henry was king to begin with.

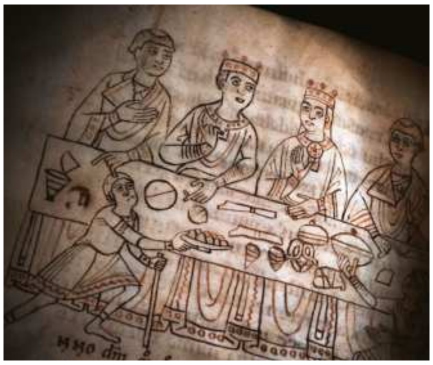
Henry was determined to ensure his line held on to the crown, even if it meant breaking tradition. Matilda was his only legitimate descendant, so during Christmas 1127 Henry made the barons of England swear an oath to accept Matilda as queen of England upon his death. "Henry was the sort of man who, if you disobeyed him, would cut your hand off, or have your eyes gouged out, or throw you out of the top of a tall tower. So it may not have even crossed his mind that people would disobey him," Dr Catherine Hanley, historian and author of *Matilda: Empress, Queen, Warrior*, tells us.

A year after these oaths, Matilda was living in France with her new husband, Geoffrey, Count of Anjou. She was thoroughly unimpressed by the marriage as her husband, who was 15 years old, was her junior and held a much more insignificant title than the emperor. The pair spent some of the early years of their marriage apart when Matilda returned to England without Geoffrey.

A reconciliation between the two saw the births of their first son, Henry, in 1133, and their second, Geoffrey, in 1134. But the death of King Henry in 1135 started a chain of events that would lead to a long period of civil war in England known as The Anarchy.

> "BEFORE MATILDA HAD A CHANCE TO CLAIM HER RIGHTFUL PLACE ON THE THRONE, IT HAD ALREADY BEEN TAKEN"

At the time of Henry I's death, Matilda was still in Anjou. It is unlikely that she would have heard of her father's demise for a few days but by the time she did, an unlikely candidate had entered the competition for the crown.



Stephen of Blois was the son of Henry I's sister, Adela. Upon hearing the news of the king's death, Stephen raced from his home in Boulogne to Westminster and was crowned king of England and duke of Normandy.

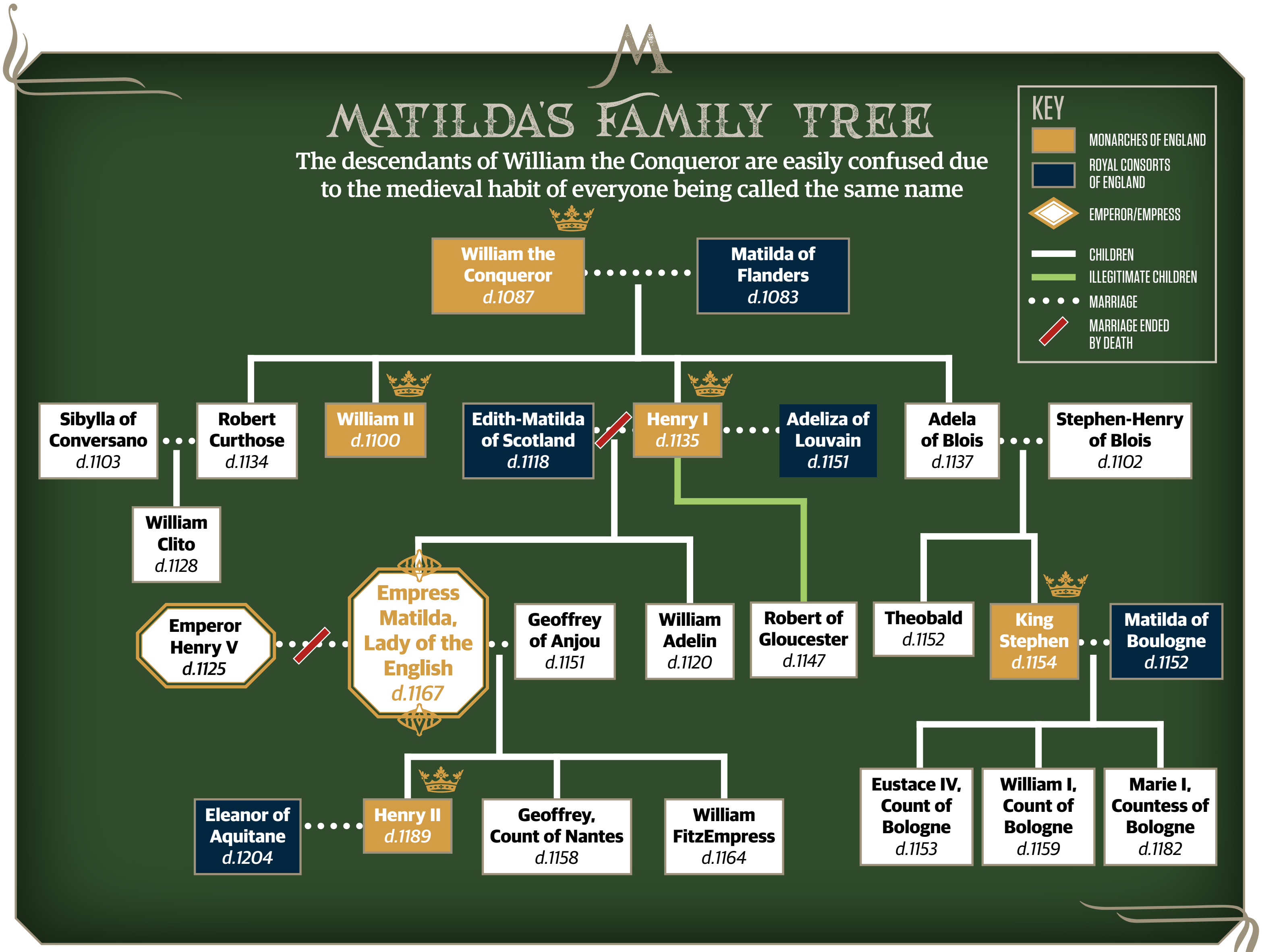
"The primary factor that made you a monarch was not being next in line or being the designated successor, it was having a coronation. That was the all-important thing. If you weren't the next in line but then you were crowned, you were the king no matter who you were before," explains Hanley. "The English monarch was not only crowned but also anointed – it was a religious ceremony too and that showed God's approval. So once you had been crowned, and you had been anointed, that did really set you apart from anyone who hadn't undergone that."

With two young children and without any resources, Matilda was powerless against her cousin. Her husband, Geoffrey, led regular raids into Normandy against Stephen's forces with little success. It wasn't until 1138 that Matilda's fortune changed. Her half-brother, Robert of Gloucester (the oldest of Henry I's many illegitimate children), defected from Stephen's cause and joined Matilda's campaign. With his lands and resources, she was able to begin her crusade to win back her promised crown.

Matilda and Robert landed in England in September 1139, with Robert heading to Bristol and Matilda to Arundel. There, she sought the protection of her stepmother, the dowager Queen Adeliza. At this point, Matilda had not posed any immediate threat to Stephen, and so he was in a difficult situation.

"It's the one time in her life that being female did Matilda a favour. Stephen was in a lose-lose situation because he has got to think of the optics," says Hanley. "If he attacks two women, one of whom is the widow of the previous king, everyone is going to think what a horrible bully that man is. The way that Adeliza and Matilda went about it was very, very clever. They put it out publicly that it was just a social call, which put Stephen on the wrong foot." Stephen, foolishly, allowed Matilda to leave Arundel and travel safely to Bristol, where she met with Robert, before continuing to Gloucester Castle.

For two years neither side made much progress. But Matilda remained resolute in her aim to claim the crown, despite opposition. "She saw herself as being the equal of those around her: she was equal or superior to them in birth, intelligence



MATILDA'S FAMILY TREE

The descendants of William the Conqueror are easily confused due to the medieval habit of everyone being called the same name

KEY
MONARCHS OF ENGLAND
ROYAL CONSORTS OF ENGLAND
EMPEROR/EMPRESS
CHILDREN
ILLEGITIMATE CHILDREN
MARRIAGE
MARRIAGE ENDED BY DEATH
William the Conqueror d.1087
Matilda of Flanders d.1083
Sibylla of Conversano d.1103
Robert Curthose d.1134
William II d.1100
Edith-Matilda of Scotland d.1118
Henry I d.1135
Adeliza of Louvain d.1151
Adela of Blois d.1137
Stephen-Henry of Blois d.1102
William Clito d.1128
Emperor Henry V d.1125
Empress Matilda, Lady of the English d.1167
Geoffrey of Anjou d.1151
William Adelin d.1120
Robert of Gloucester d.1147
Theobald d.1152
King Stephen d.1154
Matilda of Boulogne d.1152
Eleanor of Aquitane d.1204
Henry II d.1189
Geoffrey, Count of Nantes d.1158
William FitzEmpress d.1164
Eustace IV, Count of Bologne d.1153
William I, Count of Bologne d.1159
Marie I, Countess of Bologne d.1182

and political experience. She perhaps just couldn't accept that other people couldn't get past the fact that she was a woman," suggests Hanley.

The turning point of the war between the cousins came at the Battle of Lincoln in 1141. Having stayed close to the areas of England that were loyal to them (for Matilda the south-west and for Stephen the south-east), Stephen's decision to move up to Lincoln provided Matilda with an opportunity. As for Matilda's part in the battle, Hanley says: "The important thing to remember is that she was not physically there. This was one of the main disadvantages of being the female leader of her cause. She couldn't lead armies into battle, which is why having her brother working for her helped. That doesn't mean that she wasn't the general doing the strategising." Robert of Gloucester led Matilda's forces to Lincoln, where they fought and captured King Stephen. With Stephen in custody, Matilda headed to Westminster to be crowned queen.

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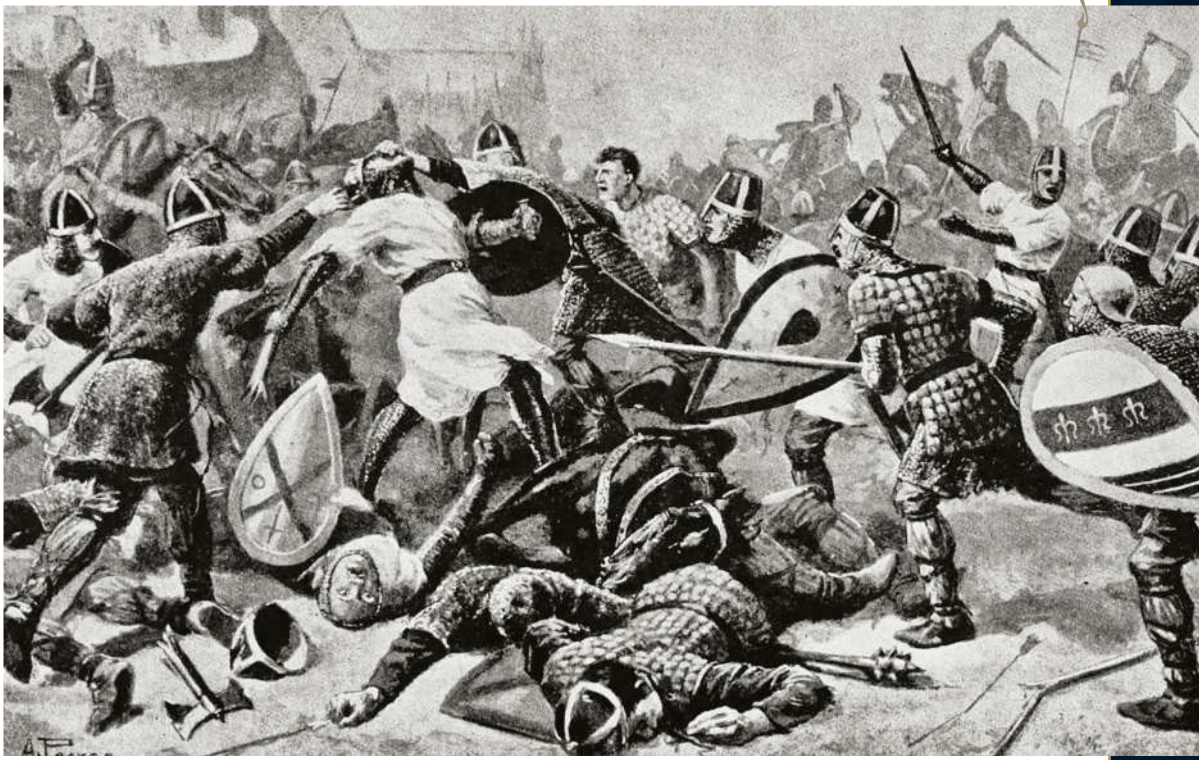
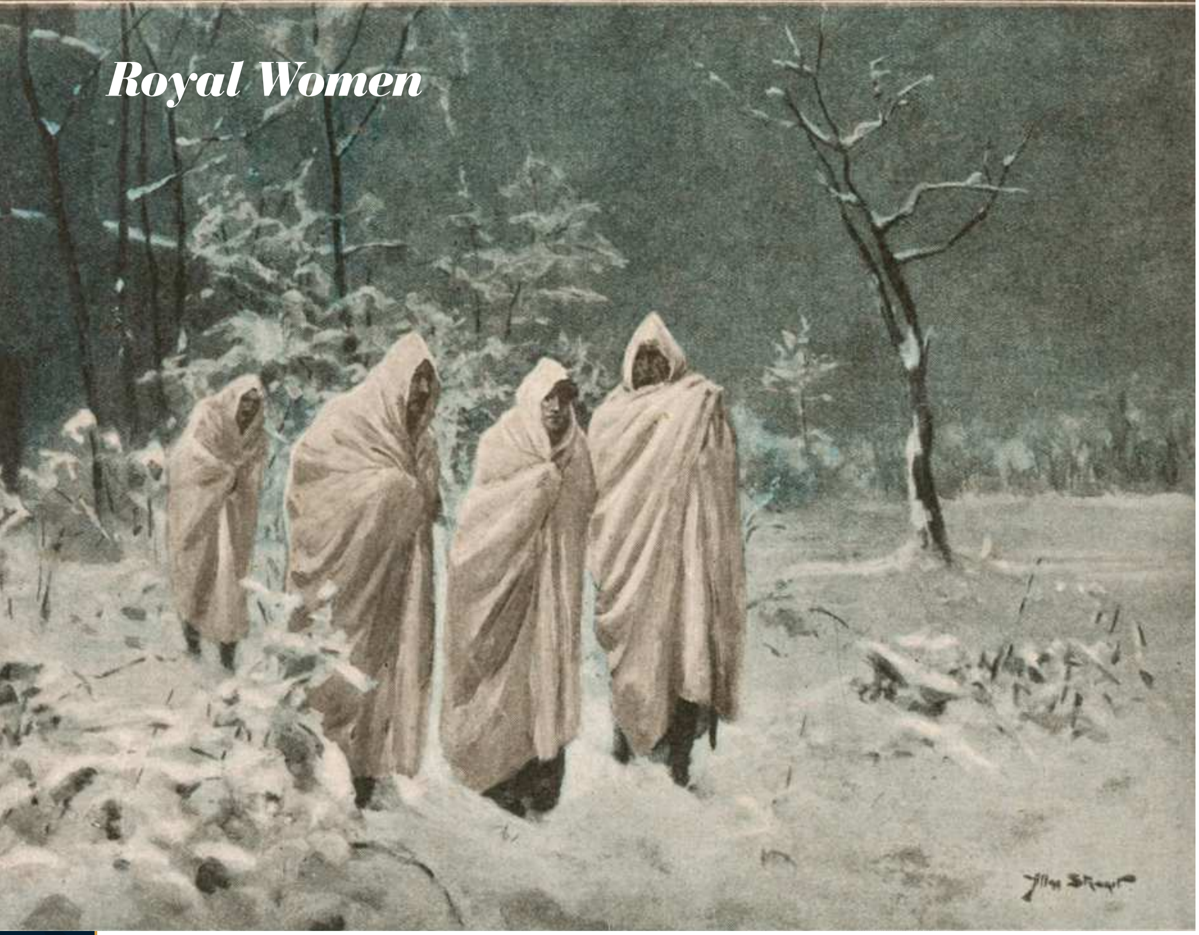




ABOVE
A depiction of Matilda escaping from Oxford Castle, camouflaged in white against the snow

Her success at Lincoln meant Matilda was proclaimed 'Lady of the English' before her coronation. But she still had a problem: some of the barons who had aligned themselves with Matilda had done so in opposition to Stephen rather than in support of her. Now, they were faced with the genuine prospect of a woman sitting on the throne.

Matilda was perceived to be troublesome by the men around her. A reputation for being bossy and domineering plagued her throughout her life, contributing to the resistance of the English people to accept her as their monarch. Hanley, however, believes Matilda's reputation needs rehabilitating: "Matilda had two of the best possible examples [of kingship]. Her father and her first husband were both considered to be really good monarchs because they were so authoritarian nobody dared to disobey them. But when she tried to do the same, nobody could accept it."

The barons were spared the 'horror' of a female ruler through the interference of an unlikely saviour. Stephen's wife, Matilda of Boulogne, resolved to save her husband from incarceration. Raising an army, she marched on London, besieging the surrounding areas and causing Empress Matilda to flee the city the night before her coronation. From there, Matilda headed to Winchester, followed by Matilda of Boulogne and her army. Once inside the city walls, Matilda of Boulogne and Henry, Bishop of Winchester (Stephen's brother), besieged Matilda's forces, eventually causing her to flee once again while Robert of Gloucester was captured. Matilda of Boulogne offered to release Robert in return for the release of Stephen. Matilda had no choice but to submit to her demands.

In a cruel twist for Empress Matilda, Matilda of Boulogne was celebrated for her heroism in her mission to save Stephen. "Matilda of Boulogne does all the things that Matilda has been doing and everyone's talking about how wonderful she is. It's not fair the way they were portrayed," says Hanley. The double standards were astounding: it was acceptable for a woman to act like a king if she was doing so for the sake of her husband, but not if she was doing it for her own benefit.

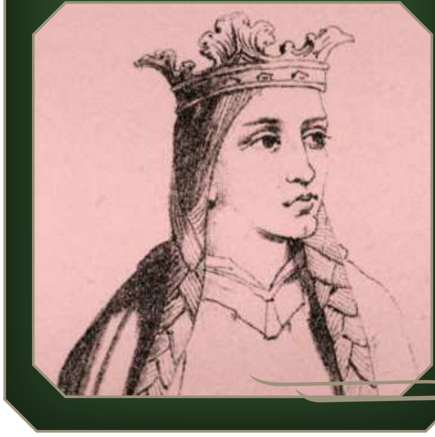
"When you've won the battle, you've captured your opponent, you've put him in prison and you've been declared the monarch but people still won't accept you, it's never going to happen. This is when Matilda started to change her strategy," explains Hanley.

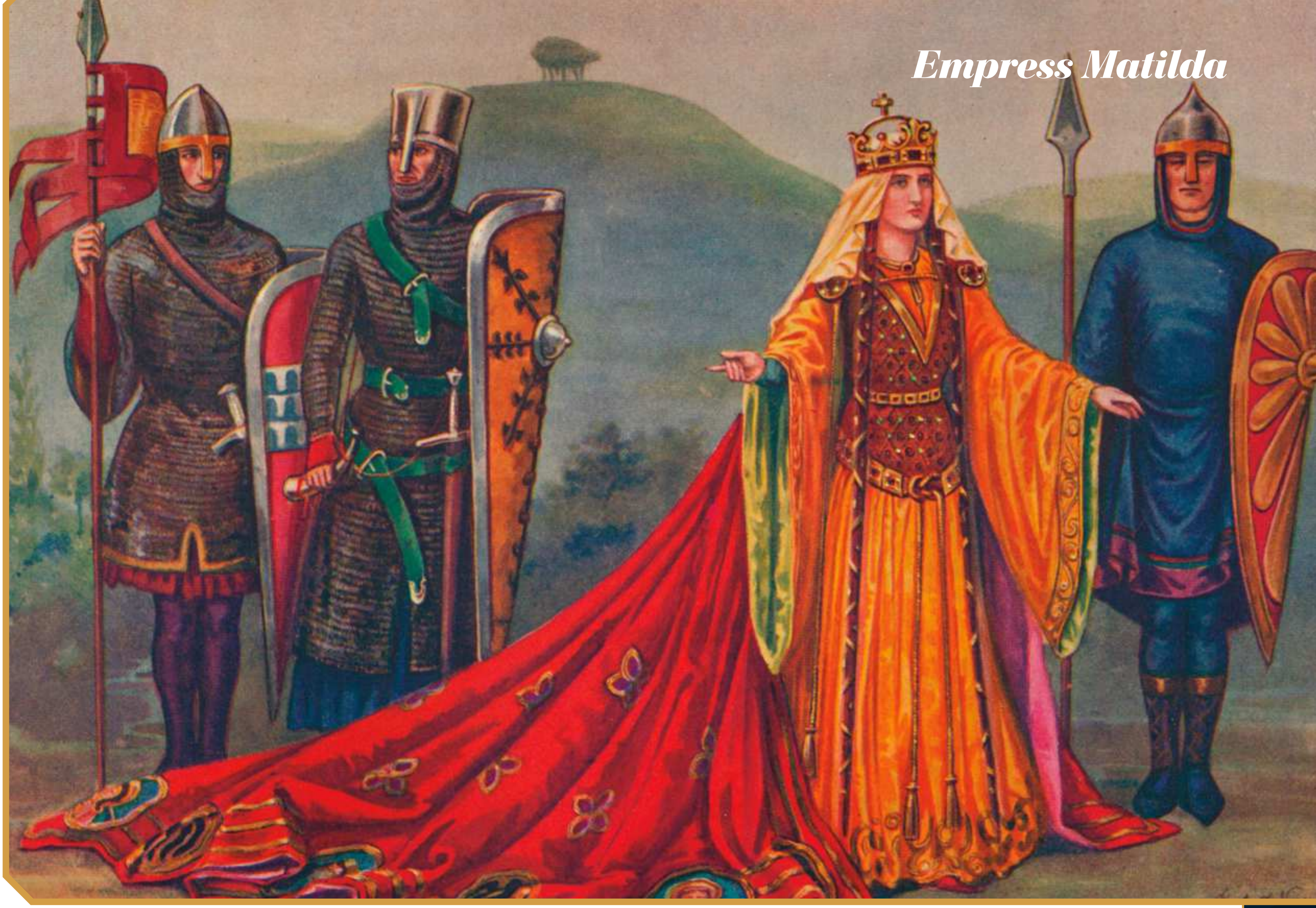
Matilda's last encounter with Stephen took place in Oxford in 1142, where she had strategically positioned herself to be close to London. While there, Stephen took the opportunity to besiege Oxford to put an end to Matilda's threat once and for all. For more than two months, Stephen's forces ravaged the city while Matilda was trapped inside the fortress of Oxford Castle. One wintry night in December, realising she had no other choice, Matilda and her men made a daring escape from St George's Tower,

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Matilda and her many names

Empress Matilda may be an unfamiliar name to many but this might be because she is sometimes referred to by a different name. In many accounts of Matilda's life she is called Maude, and even sometimes Adelaide. Often believed to be a way of differentiating her from the many Matildas of the time, it is unclear where her alternative names originate from. In the medieval period the repetitive use of certain names was not uncommon. Within the circle of Matilda's contemporaries there are several Henrys, Williams and Roberts as well as Matildas. However, Hanley does not agree with those who posit that the variations on Matilda's name are a way to separate her from others: "People say, as an excuse, that it's just to differentiate her from everyone else that's called Matilda at the time, but it's really noticeable that they only do that to her. I don't notice anyone rushing to call William the Conqueror 'Billy' just because there are so many other people called William." In fact, Hanley, who only refers to the empress as Matilda, thinks calling her Maude was a way to insult Matilda and stain her memory. "I actually think that calling her Maud is deliberately derogatory. It's trying to do her down, which is why I just don't use it," she says. "She called herself Matilda. There is an argument that Maude is like a shortening of Mathildes in Latin, but again, why only her? Why not any of the men?" It is true that Matilda of Boulogne or William the Conqueror's wife Matilda of Flanders are never called Maude. It is, therefore, important for Empress Matilda's legacy for her to be afforded the right to her own name, just like the other Matildas.





dressed all in white to camouflage themselves against the snow. After crossing the frozen Thames and sneaking through the enemy lines, they walked the 10km from Oxford to Abingdon, evading Stephen's forces.

On escaping from Oxford, Matilda was reunited with her eldest son, Henry, who had been brought to England by Robert. From this point onwards, Matilda, having realised that a woman would not be an acceptable candidate for the throne in her time, introduced a new rhetoric: her battle for the crown was being fought on behalf of her son Henry, the grandson of old King Henry.

For the next few years, she resided at the court she had set up at Devizes. The Anarchy continued, but with no great advances made by either side. As Matilda's son, Henry, grew older, he began to take the lead role in challenging Stephen and Matilda took a back seat. In 1148 she returned to Normandy, which was now under the control of her husband, Geoffrey. She rebuilt her court in Rouen and spent her time focussing her skills and efforts on the administration of her realm.

Back in England, Stephen was facing a difficult choice. "England has been at war for so long now with Stephen and Matilda that people are starting to look back at the reign of Henry I as some kind of halcyon age of peace, when everything was in order because the king was in charge," says Hanley. "People just want to go back to that. The barons are absolutely sick of [war] and some of them start making private arrangements to agree not to fight against each other."

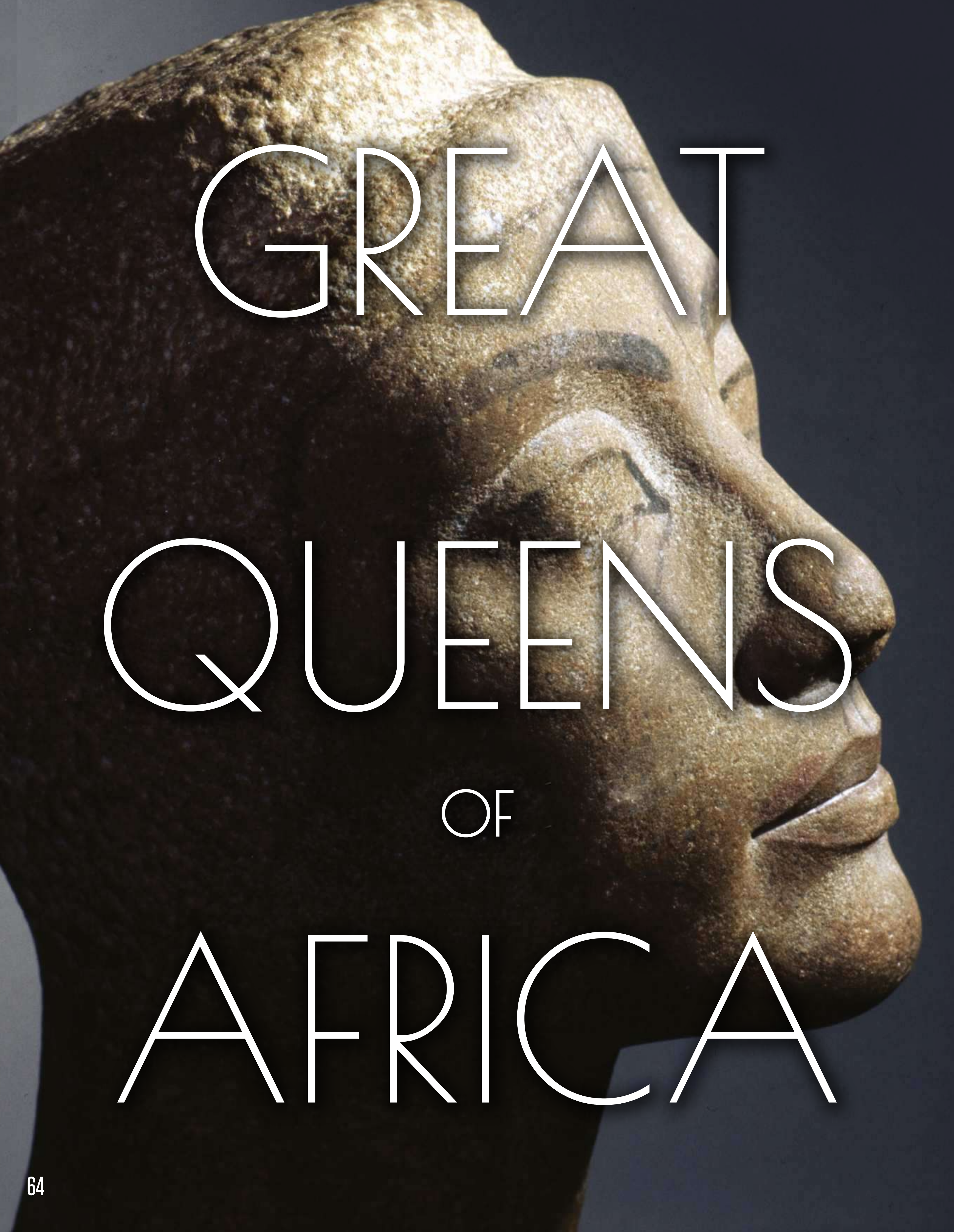
> "MATILDA PERHAPS JUST COULDN'T ACCEPT THAT OTHER PEOPLE COULDN'T GET PAST THE FACT THAT SHE WAS A WOMAN"

Matilda's propaganda campaign to position the young Henry as the true heir to the throne was so effective that Stephen had very little choice. In an ironic twist of fate, just like Henry I and his nephew, Stephen couldn't name Henry as heir without questions being asked as to why he wasn't king already. But, unlike Henry I, Stephen had a foolproof solution. In a final kick in the teeth for Matilda, Stephen effectively adopted Henry and appointed him as his heir. Matilda's son was next in line to the throne, but she was pushed aside. After the death of King Stephen in 1154, King Henry II was crowned.

"Henry II was a great king and he was a great warrior but he would never have even been there if it hadn't been for Matilda," explains Hanley. "If Matilda hadn't decided to make this claim to the throne in the first place, the man we know as Henry II would have been the count of Anjou. Matilda won, but it was at a great cost."

Matilda died in Normandy in 1167 at the age of 65. She had spent the last years of her life advising her son, King Henry II. Her tomb lies in Rouen cathedral and her epitaph reads: "Great by birth, greater by marriage, greatest in her offspring: here lies Matilda, the daughter, wife and mother of Henry." It is an ill-fitting tribute to the formidable woman who defied expectation and was so very nearly crowned as the first queen of England. Her determination, bravery and political acumen ensured she would not be forgotten, and her struggle for the crown culminated in her status as the mother of the Plantagenets, the longest ruling dynasty in English history.

ABOVE Matilda was proclaimed Lady of the English ahead of her doomed coronation



GREAT QUEENS OF AFRICA

The powerful royal women who helped Africa's historic states and kingdoms to flourish

Written by Emily Staniforth

Africa as a continent has a rich and diverse history which has often been overlooked by European scholars. From the ancient to the more recent, Africa has produced a wealth of strong and powerful women whose political capabilities and dedication to their people have strengthened nations. When looking to learn more about some of the great queens of African history, it is vital to remember that some information can be considered uncertain at best, especially when it concerns ancient and medieval figures. Throughout the world, a lot of early history is passed down via the medium of storytelling, artefacts and other art forms, as well as writing. History and folklore can often become intertwined. The mystical and religious mixes with the historical and political to create histories that are passed down from generation to generation. Unpicking what is folklore and what is fact can be difficult, yet this absence of certainty when we look at powerful women from Africa's past only makes this subject more fascinating. Some of the queens featured here may not have even existed, while some of them definitely did. Either way, their presence in local, national and international histories has influenced different traditions and cultures, and contributed to the heritage of their states and kingdoms.

THE KENTAKE OF MEROE

Queens of the Kush Kingdom

Reigned c.170 BCE – c.314 CE

The Kentake of Meroe were a line of queens who ruled the Kingdom of Kush in what is now Sudan. Translating as 'Queen Mother' or 'Royal Woman', it is believed that at least some of the Kentake ruled from the city of Meroe as independent sovereigns. It is also possible that some Kentake queens ruled alongside a king, although this is not known for certain. Also referred to as the Candaces of Meroe (the Latinised version), these eight Kentake queens were effective leaders who headed up armies and engaged in international trade and diplomacy.

A lot of what is known about the queens of Kush has been deciphered from archaeological discoveries such as carvings, tombs and hieroglyphics (the Kush kingdom was influenced by the Egyptians), as well as the accounts of contemporary historians such as Pliny the Elder and the brief inclusion of a 'Candace' in the Bible. Though each Kentake queen reigned at a different time with a different agenda, it is clear that most were skilled and capable monarchs who oversaw the growth of Meroe's affluence and influence until the decline of the kingdom in around 350 CE. The archaeological remains of Meroe are indicative of a powerful city that was rich in both wealth and culture.

IDIA

Queen Mother of Benin

Reigned c.1504 – ?

The kingdom of Benin, now in modern-day Nigeria, was in a state of civil war at the end of the 15th century after the death of Oba (king) Ozolua. The oba's two sons, Arhuaran and Esigie, took control of separate areas of the kingdom, ruling Udo and Benin City respectively. The civil war between them weakened Benin, and the neighbouring Igala people sent soldiers to try and take over the north of the kingdom. However, Esigie had someone extraordinary on his side: his mother Idia. The second wife of the oba, she was determined to see her son on the throne. With Idia's help, Esigie defeated his brother and saw off the Igala people, becoming the oba of Benin.

Esigie credited his victory to his mother's counsel and mystical knowledge, and Idia was proclaimed as the Iyoba (Queen Mother), a position created especially for her. Esigie also abolished the Benin custom of killing the oba's mother upon her son's succession to the throne. Instead, Idia was given her own palace, the Eguae-Iyoba, and effectively ruled alongside her son. She spent the rest of her life dedicated to helping him rule the Benin kingdom. Revered by the people of Benin as the first woman to go to war, an ivory carving of Idia's face has ensured that she is remembered as the first Iyoba. Upon her death, the Iyoba title passed to Esigie's favourite wife.

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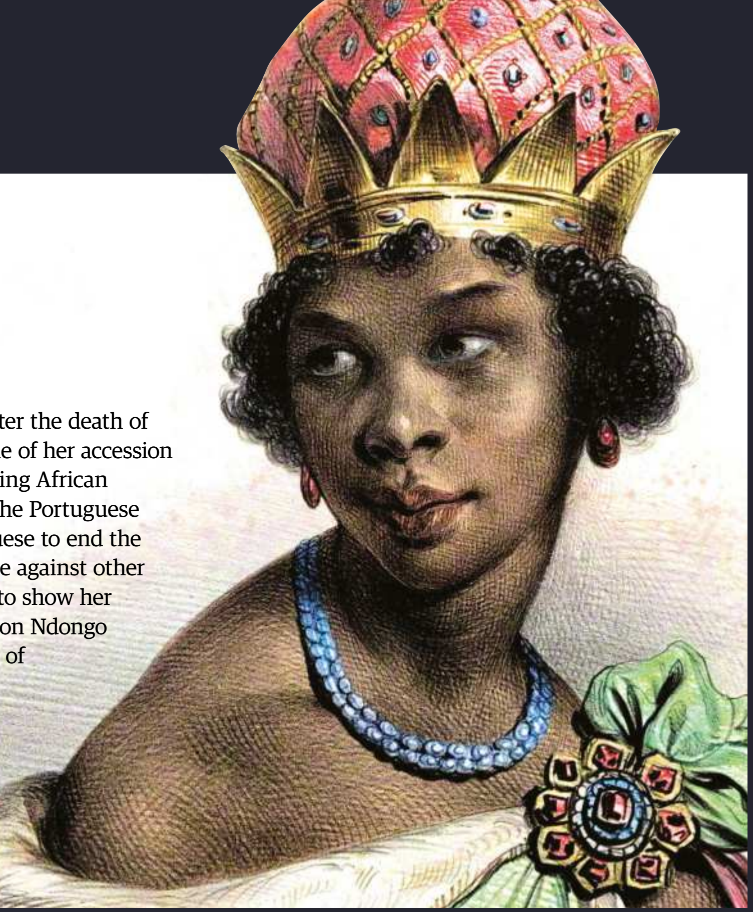
NZINGA MBANDE

Queen of Ndongo and Matamba

Reigned c.1624-63



Queen Nzinga Mbande inherited the state of Ndongo (in present-day Angola) after the death of her brother, the king, around 1624. Populated by the Mbundu people, at the time of her accession Ndongo was facing threats from both Portuguese invaders and other neighbouring African states. To solve both problems simultaneously, Nzinga attempted to neutralise the Portuguese threat by positioning Ndongo as an intermediary state, allying with the Portuguese to end the seizing of Ndongo's people for slavery and to have the support of the Portuguese against other African invaders. She converted to Christianity, taking the name Ana de Souza to show her commitment to this partnership with Portugal. However, Portugal soon turned on Ndongo and Nzinga and her people were forced to flee, conquering the nearby kingdom of Matamba and settling there. After an unsuccessful attempt to regain control of Ndongo with the help of the Netherlands, where she personally led troops into battle, Nzinga focussed her attention on strengthening her power and the economy in Matamba. By the time of her death, Nzinga had established Matamba as a commercial state that operated as an equal of the Portuguese colonies. She also re-converted to Christianity before she died at the age of 81.

A group of Mino warriors, who were originally formed by Tassi Hangbe

TASSI HANGBE

Queen of the Dahomey Kingdom

Reigned c.1705-08

A question mark hangs over the head of Tassi Hangbe, an 18th century queen of the Dahomey Kingdom in what is now the country of Benin. Some historians are sceptical about whether she even existed; others, like Stanley B Alpern, suggest that our limited knowledge of Hangbe's life has arisen from a deliberate attempt to eradicate her from history. "The long silence on [Hangbe] may well have been due not to her non-existence but to a dynastic policy of suppressing her memory," says Alpern in his article *On the Origins of the Amazons of Dahomey.* Oral histories and material evidence point to the existence of Hangbe, who is believed to be the founder of the Mino warriors, a group of female soldiers who fiercely defended their kingdom. It is believed Hangbe was proclaimed Queen of Dahomey after the death of her twin brother, King Akaba, and to enforce her position as a woman on the throne she formed the female-only military regiment. The Mino, christened the Dahomey Amazons by Europeans who encountered them, acted chiefly as royal bodyguards and continued to do so for the subsequent kings of Dahomey after Hangbe was deposed. If Hangbe's successor King Agaja aimed to erase her from Dahomey history, he failed - her legacy survives in the proud tradition of the mighty Mino warriors, who continued to operate until the end of the 19th century.

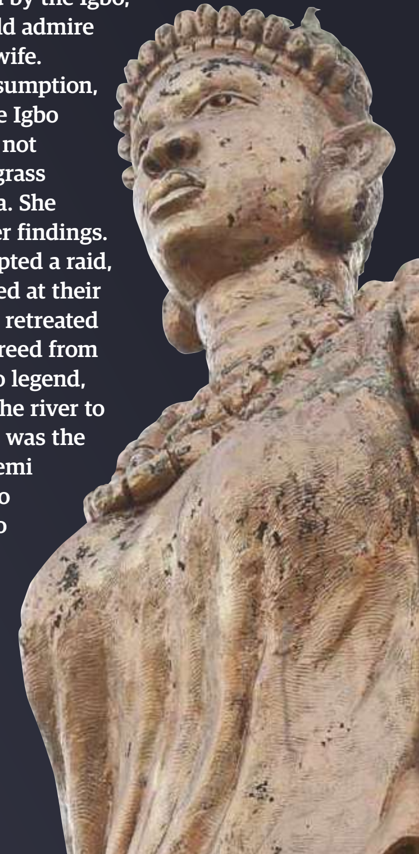
MOREMI AJASORO

Queen of Yoruba

Reigned 12th century

A queen of the Yoruba tribe, Moremi Ajasoro was a wife of the king of the city of Ife, in the south-west of present-day Nigeria. Estimated to have lived during the 12th century, Moremi and the people of Ife experienced regular raids by the neighbouring Igbo tribe, who the Yoruba referred to as "Forest People" because they believed them to be spirits. The Igbo tribe would raid Ife to abduct people for slavery. Having seen her people suffer, Moremi asked the spirit of the river to help her discover their weakness. Then, disguised as a trader, Moremi allowed herself to be captured by the Igbo, trusting that their leader would admire her beauty and make her his wife.

Moremi was right in her assumption, and integrated herself into the Igbo tribe, learning that they were not spirits but people dressed in grass and leaves to scare the Yoruba. She returned to Ife and relayed her findings. The next time the Igbo attempted a raid, torches were lit and brandished at their flammable clothing. The Igbo retreated and the Yoruba people were freed from their oppression. According to legend, Moremi went to the spirit of the river to learn that the price of its help was the sacrifice of her only son. Moremi pleaded for her son's life, to no avail, and she was left with no choice. Upon killing her son, the Yoruba people promised to be her eternal children. The Queen Moremi Statue of Liberty stands as a reminder of her sacrifice.



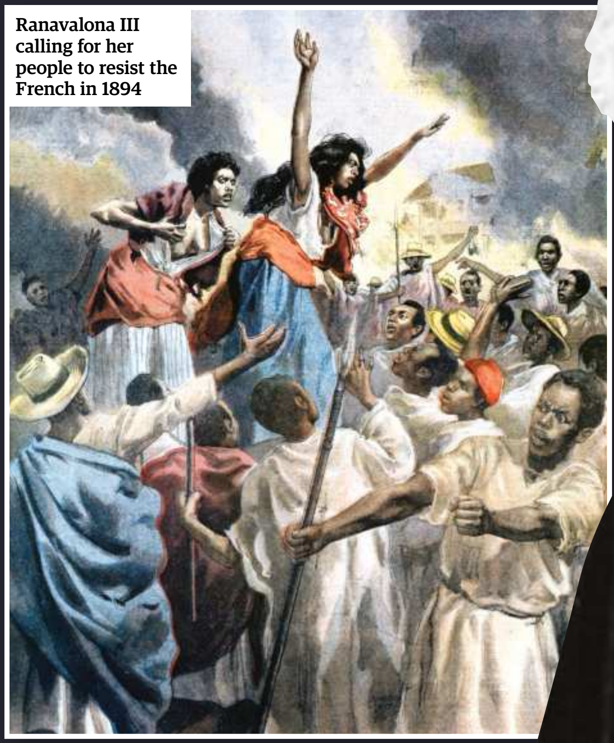
RANAVALONA III

Queen of Madagascar

Reigned 1883-97

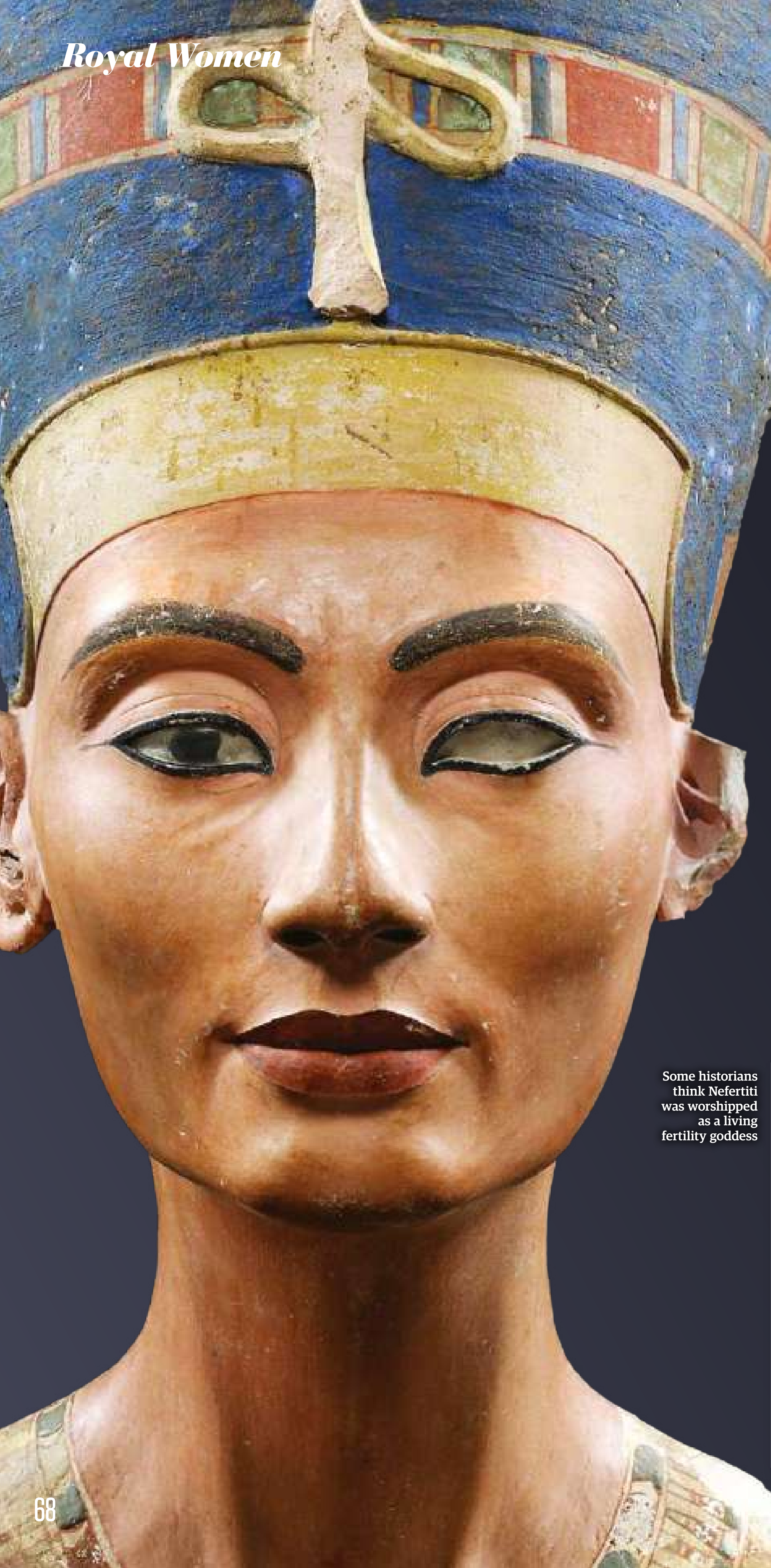
As the favourite great niece of Queen Ranavalona II, Princess Razafindrahety was made Queen of Madagascar, at the age of 22, upon the queen's death in 1883. She took the name of her predecessors, becoming Ranavalona III, during Madagascar's transition from being governed by absolute rule to a constitutional monarchy. Widowed shortly before her accession, Ranavalona married the prime minister of Madagascar, Rainilaiarivony, who had also been married to the two previous queens. He was a lot older than the young Ranavalona and there was speculation that Rainilaiarivony was responsible for the death of Ranavalona's first husband.

Despite her youth and largely ceremonial position as queen, Ranavalona took an active role in governance, focussing on retaining Madagascar's independence from the threat of French colonisation. She ensured she was a recognisable and friendly figure to her people, taking part in public engagements and visits to hospitals and schools. However, her efforts could not hold off the French, and in 1895 she was forced to hand over the capital, Tananarive. Ranavalona, along with her family, were exiled to the island of Reunion in 1897 because the French feared her presence could inspire an uprising of the Madasgacan people. After two years she was sent to Algiers, where she lived a comfortable life until she died of an embolism in 1917. Ranavalona was never permitted to return to Madagascar, though her remains were eventually returned to the island, where she is now buried.



Ranavalona III calling for her people to resist the French in 1894

All images © Alamy



NEFERTITI

Pharaoh of Egypt

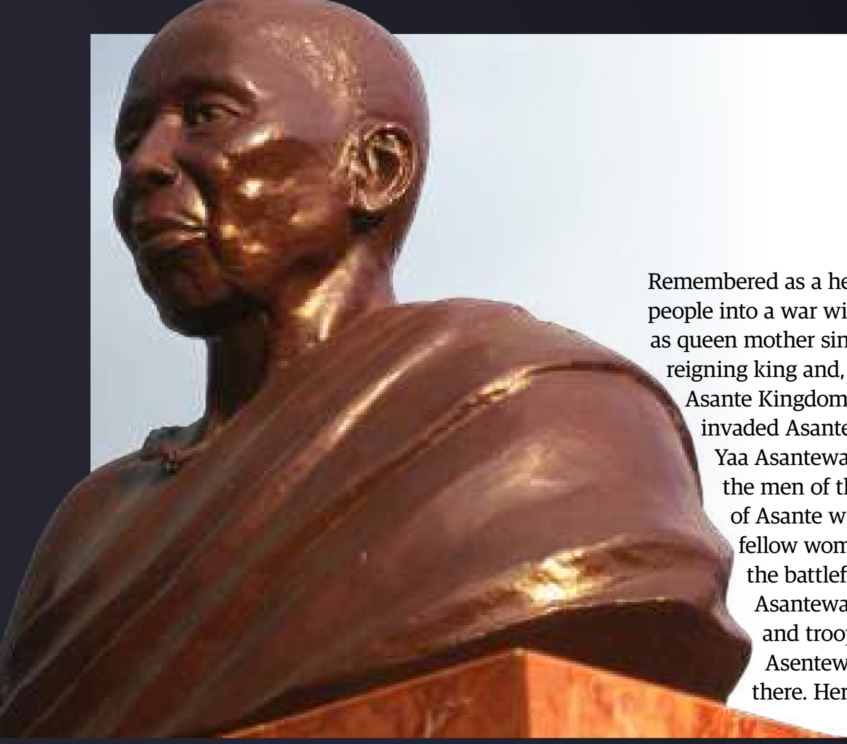
Reigned c.1353 BCE – c.1330 BCE

One of the most recognisable faces of Ancient Egypt, Nefertiti was only reintroduced to the public consciousness in 1912 when a bust of her was discovered by a German archaeologist and put on display in Berlin.

The Great Royal Wife of King Akhenaten, who reigned as pharaoh from around 1353 BCE to 1336 BCE, Nefertiti appears to have been a co-ruler with her husband. It was not uncommon for Egyptian pharaohs to be female, but Nefertiti seems to have been extremely influential. Contemporary images show her in positions of political and religious power, such as driving away enemies, at the reins of chariots, and leading ceremonies of worship. She is also often depicted with accentuated curves alongside her six children, leading some historians to believe that she was considered a living fertility goddess.

Nefertiti's disappearance from history has long divided opinion among historians. All trace of her seems to vanish during Akhenaten's 12th year of rule, with some believing she must have died. However, her body was not found in the royal tombs at Amarna in Upper Egypt. Others think Nefertiti may have ruled Egypt independently after her husband's death under the alternative name Smenkhkare. Whether she died or became pharaoh, the location of Nefertiti's tomb remains a mystery to archaeologists.

Some historians think Nefertiti was worshipped as a living fertility goddess



YAA ASANTEWAA

Queen Mother of Asante

Reigned 1880s – c.1901

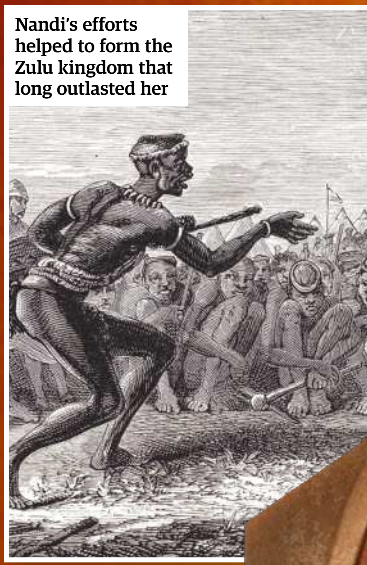
Remembered as a hero of the Asante kingdom, in modern-day Ghana, Yaa Asantewaa led her people into a war with British colonial forces who threatened their independence. Having acted as queen mother since the reign of her brother, Yaa Asantewaa was the main advisor to the reigning king and, most importantly, the custodian of the Golden Stool – the emblem of the Asante Kingdom, symbolic of power and authority over its people. When British troops invaded Asante in 1886 and exiled King Prempeh I and other leaders to the Seychelles, Yaa Asantewaa sought to protect the Golden Stool. Having seen little enthusiasm from the men of the kingdom to go to war, she took charge, proclaiming: "If you the men of Asante will not go forward, then we will. We the women will. I shall call upon my fellow women. We will fight the white men. We will fight until the last of us falls in the battlefields." Leading her army of women and newly inspired men into battle, Yaa Asantewaa was more than a match for the British forces. However, extra resources and troops supplied to the British resulted in a defeat for the Asante kingdom. Yaa Asentewaa was captured and exiled to the Seychelles, living out the rest of her days there. Her courage and determination has ensured her legacy as an almighty queen.

NANDI

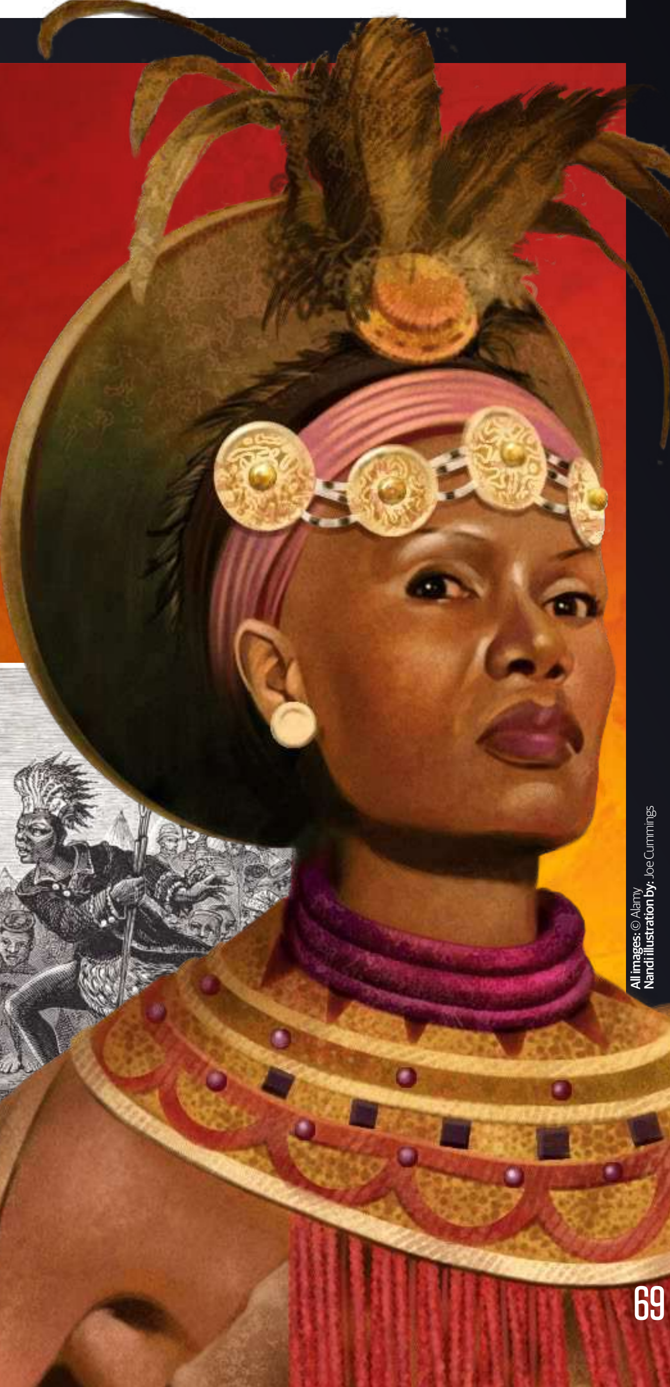
Queen Mother of the Zulu Kingdom

Reigned c.1816-27

Nandi was born into the Langeni tribe in what is now South Africa. Much of what is known about her life has been recorded in oral histories, with a few written sources from people who encountered her also providing information. As a young woman, Nandi is said to have engaged in an illicit relationship with Senzangakhona, the chief of the Zulu kingdom in Southern Africa. The relationship was controversial, not only because the pair were not married, but also because Nandi and Senzangakhona were considered to be too closely related to each other. As a result of their affair, Nandi became pregnant and gave birth to a son she named Shaka. Once Shaka was born, Senzangakhona married Nandi, and she and her son became part of the Zulu royal family, with Nandi holding the lowly position as the chief's third wife. During this time, Nandi gave birth to a second child, this time a daughter. With a reputation for being bad-tempered and difficult, Nandi and her children never felt welcomed in the Zulu kingdom and so left, taking refuge with the Mthethwa people. There Shaka, encouraged by his mother and the Mthethwa chief Dingiswayo, rose through the ranks and became a skilled warrior. Upon the death of Senzangakhona in 1815, Shaka returned to take the chieftainship of Zulu by force from his elder brother. He was also named as the successor of Dingiswayo before his assassination in 1817. As chief, Shaka helped the Zulu kingdom to thrive. Nandi, as mother of the chief, held an incredibly influential position, acting as an advisor to her son. When she died in 1827, she was given a funeral fit for a queen and Shaka enforced a period of public mourning. Her resilience and determination to provide for her son, despite the hardships she went through, has seen her revered as a great figure of the Zulu kingdom.



Nandi's efforts helped to form the Zulu kingdom that long outlasted her



All images: © Alamy
Nandi illustration by: Joe Cummings

TUSKEGEE AIRMEN
1941
1946

WAR STORIES

WWII heroes and villains

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Learn about the maverick Scottish officer who took a small commando unit and started the SAS

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THE PHANTOM MAJOR

AND THE FOUNDING OF THE SAS

How a young Scottish officer raised a small commando team that grew into a legendary special forces unit

Written by Gavin Mortimer

Main image and badge: © Alamy
Inset image: © Getty Images

On 10 September 1942 the *Stirling Observer* ran a story about a local lad under the headline "Daring Deeds in the Middle East". The newspaper dubbed David Stirling the 'Phantom Major' and it gave its readers a flavour of his work deep behind German lines in Libya: "A favourite method was to steal in among the enemy, perhaps after journeys of upwards of four hundred miles, and plant delayed action incendiary bombs in aircraft, hangars and transport. After one such exploit he sent all his men away and waited alone for the first explosion. The moment it came he opened the door of the German guard-house. In front of him he saw a startled officer sitting at a desk. Around the walls in bunks were about eighteen Nazi soldiers. Stirling had a grenade in his hand. 'Nein, nein, nein!' said the Nazi, groping for his revolver. 'Yes, yes, yes,' said the British major, and he lobbed the grenade and slammed the door. As he ran into the darkness there was an explosion."

More than one reader must have started as they read the 'Boys' Own' account. Was this the same Stirling they had known before the war? The privileged aristocrat, the indolent loafer, the lounge lizard, as the press called the foppish young men of the 1930s who preferred nightclubs and cinemas to hard work and duty.

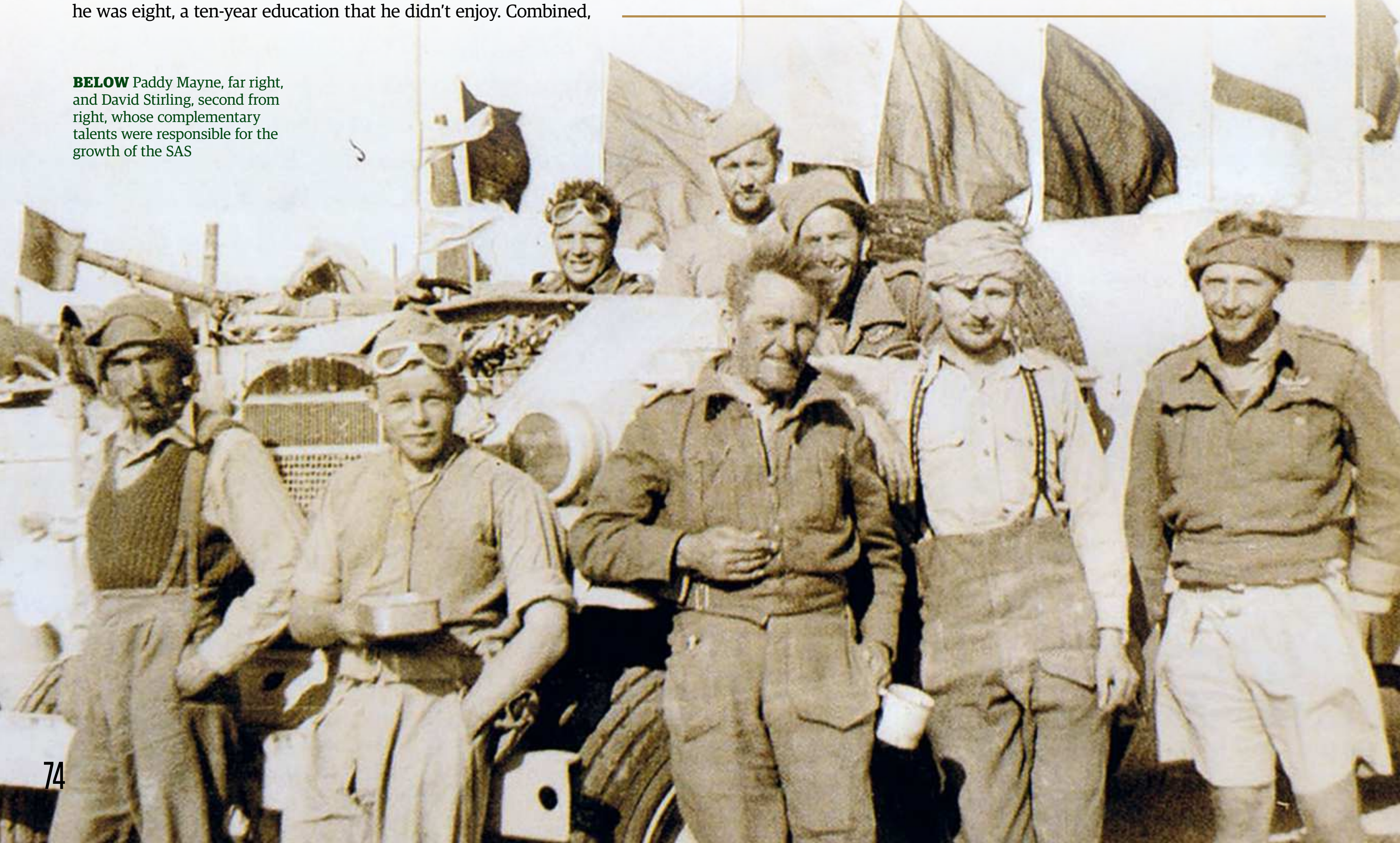
The Phantom Major and David Stirling were one and the same, and the story of how Stirling raised a small commando unit that became the Special Air Service is one of the more remarkable of World War II.

Stirling was born into the landed gentry in 1915, the fourth child (and third boy) of Brigadier-general Archibald Stirling and his wife, Margaret, whose father had been an aide-de-camp to Queen Victoria in the 1880s. Stirling was an outsider. He suffered a speech impediment as a toddler that exacerbated his natural shyness and he felt overawed by his extrovert mother and his rumbustious brothers. He was sent away to boarding school when he was eight, a ten-year education that he didn't enjoy. Combined, these childhood experiences moulded his character, transforming him into a young man who was self-sufficient, innovative and determined to prove himself. There was a contradiction at the heart of Stirling: he could on the one hand be lazy and on the other driven. It depended on his level of motivation.

On leaving school Stirling drifted. He dropped out of Cambridge University after three terms and didn't last long as an apprentice architect in Edinburgh. He toured Europe, visiting France and Switzerland, until finally, in November 1938 his exasperated mother packed him off to America to work on the ranch of a family friend.

Stirling was in Montana driving horses towards the ranch in El Paso when he learned in September 1939 that Britain and Germany were once more at war. He returned to Britain and reported for duty at the Scots Guards training battalion at Pirbright in Surrey. He had been there before, briefly in the summers of 1937 and 1938, having joined the supplementary reserve; but that was part-time soldiering in peacetime. Now he was training for war and Stirling soon discovered he lacked the discipline and temperament for the Guards. When he wasn't being surly to his instructors, he was falling asleep in lectures or skipping them for more pleasurable pursuits. One of his contemporaries in the Guards, Carol Mather, recalled: "He was certainly a very idle officer, a lazy fellow. A bit of a gambler, a bit of a drinker… a very amusing companion but we never saw him really in the role of a great leader."

> "HE LOBBED THE GRENADE AND SLAMMED THE DOOR. AS HE RAN INTO THE DARKNESS THERE WAS AN EXPLOSION"



BELOW Paddy Mayne, far right, and David Stirling, second from right, whose complementary talents were responsible for the growth of the SAS

STIRLING AND STIRLING

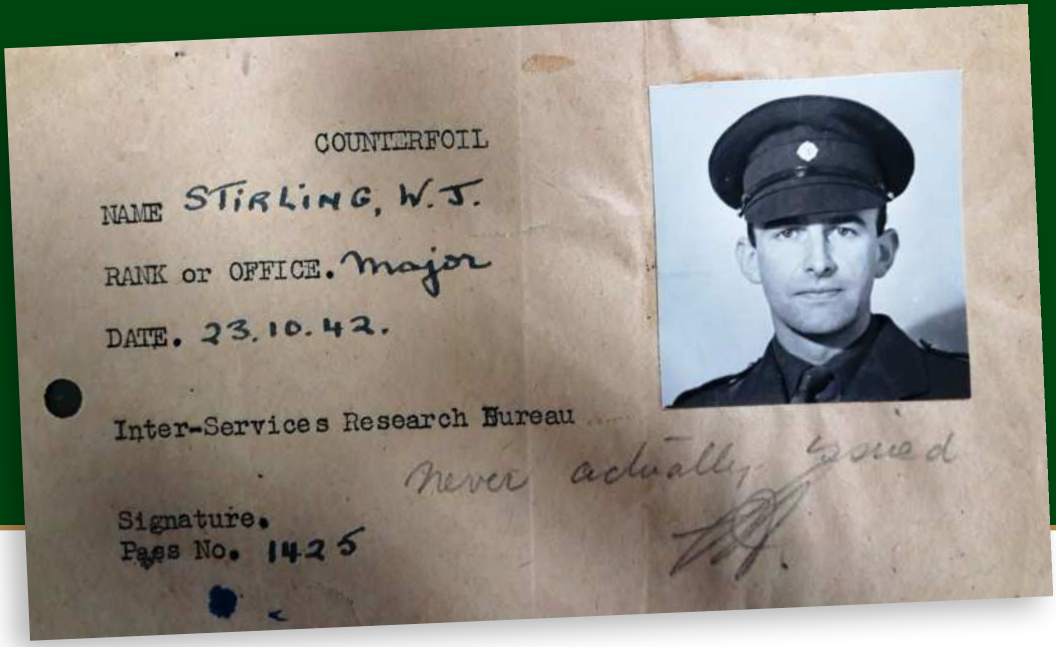
Bill Stirling was David's elder brother and a guerrilla leader in his own right

Bill Stirling was a man who preferred to remain in the shadows, allowing his younger brother to lay claim to being the founder of the SAS. Yet Bill was in many ways the father of British special forces in WWII. An early recruit to Military Intelligence, Bill was selected in a six-man sabotage team in April 1940 for a guerrilla campaign in Norway. The operation was aborted when their submarine hit a mine but the preparation for the mission had revealed to Bill the deficiencies in how Britain trained soldiers for irregular warfare. On his own initiative he petitioned the War Office to establish a Commando Special Training Centre, which opened for business in Scotland in June 1940.

Bill was the chief instructor and throughout the rest of the year hundreds of men passed through the school and received a grounding in guerrilla fighting. In January 1941 Bill sailed to North Africa with the Special Operations Executive (SOE), an organisation skilled in clandestine warfare, and in Egypt Bill helped David create the SAS.

In October 1942 Bill was promoted to lieutenant-colonel and appointed to command the Small Scale Raiding Force, an amphibious raiding unit, which in May 1943 became the Second SAS regiment based in Algeria.

Under Bill's leadership, 2AS carried out many daring operations by boat, jeep and parachute in 1943. He was sacked as commanding officer in June 1944 after a fierce disagreement with senior command about the best way to deploy the SAS during the invasion of France. Disenchanted with the army, Bill returned to run the family estate in Scotland and post-war he enjoyed a successful business career.



COUNTERFOIL

NAME STIRLING, W.J.

RANK or OFFICE. Major

DATE. 23.10.42.

Inter-Services Research Bureau

never actually issued

Signature.

Pass No. 1425

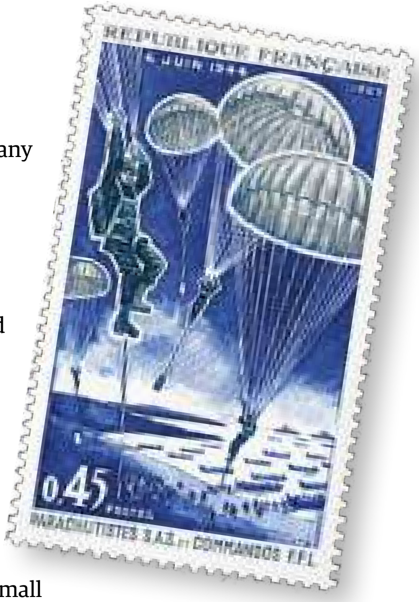
It was his elder brother, Bill (see above), who amicably parted Stirling and the Scots Guards in the summer of 1940, employing him as the adjutant at the commando training school he had established in the north-west of Scotland. Bill then steered his brother towards the newly formed commandos, and in January 1941 Stirling was shipped to North Africa with Number Eight Commando, one of three troops despatched to Egypt in order to attack Italian targets in Libya and the Mediterranean.

The commandos' arrival in North Africa coincided with that of General Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps, sent by Hitler to bolster the crumbling Italian forces in Libya. The balance of the Desert War shifted and opportunities to deploy the commandos dwindled, and in June 1941 they were disbanded.

Stirling had become disenchanted with the commandos long before their demise and, together with a fellow officer, Jock Lewes, had acquired a handful of parachutes. The pair wanted to experiment with this innovation that Germany had incorporated into its military. On 12 June Stirling, Lewes and guardsmen Roy Davies and Mick D'Arcy made their first jump. "The instructions were to dive out as though going into water," recalled D'Arcy. "We hooked ourselves up, circled the aerodrome, and on a signal from the RAF officer, Lt Lewes and Davies dived out. Next time round I dived out, and was surprised to see Lt Stirling pass me in the air. Lt Lewes made a perfect landing, next came Davies a little shaken. Lt Stirling injured his spine and also lost his sight for about an hour."

He was taken to hospital, where he remained for several weeks. His brother, Bill, who was working at Middle East HQ in Cairo, was a frequent visitor and they discussed in depth the idea David had for a small parachute unit which, as he wrote after the war, "was based on the principle of the fullest exploitation of surprise and of making the minimum demands on manpower and equipment… if an aerodrome or transport park was the objective of an operation, then the destruction of 50 aircraft or units of transport was more easily accomplished by a sub-unit of five men than by a force of 200 men".

It was an unorthodox idea, a new form of warfare that fired Stirling's imagination. This was soldiering, in his eyes, not the spit and polish of the Guards. The challenge was how to present the initiative to the high command. Legend has it that Stirling climbed under the barbed-wire fence (some accounts state he climbed over it) that encircled HQ and barged into the office ▶



ABOVE A 1969 French stamp commemorating the landing of SAS commandos in 1944

© Alamy

LEFT Stirling obtained a fleet of US Willys jeeps in June 1942 and the SAS used them to devastating effect in raiding Nazi airfields

3x Image courtesy of Gavin Mortimer

Image courtesy of Gavin Mortimer

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“NEXT TIME ROUND I DIVED OUT, AND WAS SURPRISED TO SEE LT STIRLING PASS ME IN THE AIR”

ABOVE This ‘Originals’ were among the first chosen by Stirling in the summer of 1941 and include Johnny Cooper, far right.

RIGHT L Detachment Special Air Service pictured in North Africa in 1943

of General Neil Ritchie, deputy chief of the General Staff. The reality is more prosaic; David and Bill summarised their idea on a memo and Bill presented it to his immediate superior, General Arthur Smith, the chief of the General Staff. Within three days David had been promoted to captain and authorised to raise a force of six officers and 60 other ranks. “At the time of the unit’s formation, about the end of July 1941, Brigadier Dudley Clarke was responsible for a branch in the Middle East, which dealt among other things with military deception,” said Stirling. “One of his objects was to persuade the enemy that there was a fully equipped parachute and glider brigade in the Middle East… to humour him we agreed to name our unit ‘L’ Detachment, SAS Brigade. Thus was the origin of the name, Special Air Service.” Some wag within HQ declared that in fact ‘SAS’ actually stood for Stirling and Stirling.

David Stirling established the unit’s training camp at Kabrit, 144km east of Cairo, and left most of the instruction to Jock Lewes, his second-in-command, while he took care of logistics in the Egyptian capital. The volunteers for the SAS chosen by Stirling were all former commandos and the youngest among them was 19-year-old Johnny Cooper. “Jock instilled into us that the end product of our training was for us to become independent in every way, operating either alone or in very small groups,” he later recalled. “We would have to develop an ingrained self-confidence.”

A lot of the training was already familiar to the erstwhile commandos but parachute instruction was a new discipline that none of them relished. On their first ‘live’ jump, two men fell to their deaths because of faulty parachutes. Hours after the tragedy Stirling assembled the men, remembered Cooper, and told them the problem had been identified and rectified. “He also told us that parachute training would recommence the following morning, and that he would be the first to jump.”

CAPRICORN CAMPAIGNER

David Stirling moved to Africa after the war and founded a social justice movement

David Stirling emigrated to Rhodesia, modern-day Zimbabwe, after the war and in 1949 he founded the Capricorn Africa Society (CAS). The aim of CAS was to merge the six British Territories of North and South Rhodesia, Nyasaland, Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika into a "single self-governing Federation under the British Crown wherein all men shall live side by side in concord, sufficiency and freedom". Because of its location between the Equator and the Tropic Capricorn, Stirling called his society 'Capricorn'. The project faced opposition from the start from both the left and the right. White settlers in southern Africa feared CAS would undermine their wealth and influence, while the left suspected Stirling's self-governing Federation was an attempt to maintain the Empire beneath the veneer of greater autonomy for Africa, a view that was articulated by the Socialist newspaper *The Daily Worker.*

Increasingly beset by financial difficulties, CAS failed to win the support among local populations and Stirling admitted defeat in 1958. He returned to Britain and in 1967 launched Watchguard International, the world's first private security company, which recruited former soldiers – some from the SAS – to act in effect as high-end mercenaries in trouble spots such as Libya following the coup led by Colonel Gaddafi in 1969. Stirling was knighted in 1989 for 'Services to the Military' and he died the following year.

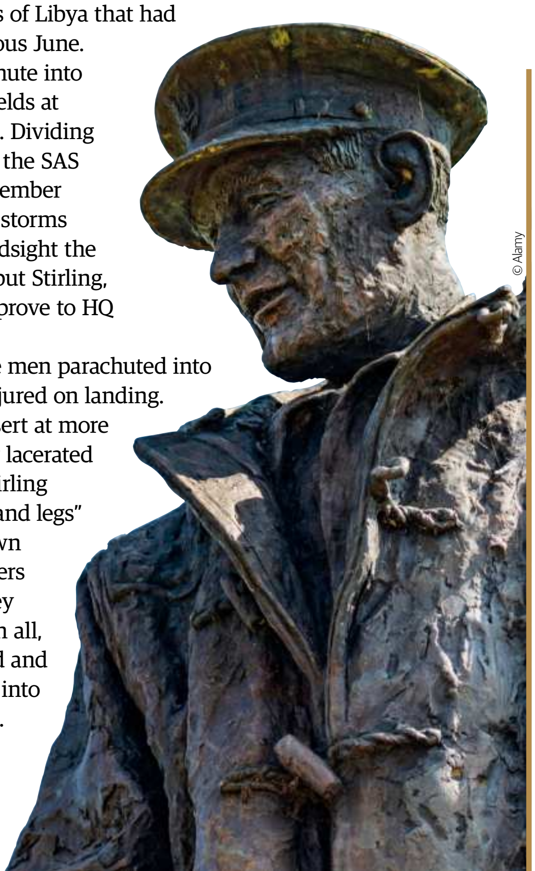
Image source: wiki/Stevan Kragujević

The inaugural SAS operation, codenamed Squatter, was scheduled for the night of 16/17 November. It was timed to coincide with a major British offensive, the aim of which was to retake the eastern coastal regions of Libya that had been lost to the Germans the previous June.

The task of the SAS was to parachute into enemy territory and attack the airfields at Gazala and Tmimi, in eastern Libya. Dividing his 55-strong party into five 'sticks', the SAS took off in the early evening of November 16, and flew into one of the fiercest storms to sweep the region in years. In hindsight the mission should have been aborted but Stirling, ever the gambler, was desperate to prove to HQ what he and his men could do.

The operation was a disaster. The men parachuted into a ferocious wind and many were injured on landing. Cooper was "dragged across the desert at more than 30mph by the wind", his body lacerated by stones and camel thorn bush. Stirling "sustained injuries about the arms and legs" but at least he, like Cooper, was down in one piece. Many weren't and others were captured by the Italians as they wandered aimlessly in the desert. In all, not one enemy plane was destroyed and of the 55 SAS men who parachuted into Libya only 21 returned to their base.

BELOW The David Stirling Memorial near his ancestral home in Scotland



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Among those that did were Stirling, Lewes and another of the officers, a Northern Irishman called Blair Mayne. Invariably nicknamed 'Paddy', Mayne was a big man who had played international rugby in the second row before the war. He was a boxing champion, too, a natural athlete with a mind as agile as his body.

He and Stirling had little in common and their relationship could best be described as respectful. Together, however, they complemented one another. Mayne was a natural guerrilla fighter; he relished the thrill and talked of going on raids to find some 'good killing'. Stirling's strength was cerebral. He was always thinking of ways to stay one step ahead of the enemy.

Three weeks after the failure of their first operation, Mayne and five men launched an attack on Tamet airfield, blowing up 24 enemy aircraft, and a fortnight later the Irishman returned and destroyed a further 27 planes. Another SAS raid in December 1941, led by Lt Bill Fraser, accounted for 37 aircraft at Agedabia

On each occasion the SAS raiders were transported to their targets in trucks driven by men of the Long Range Desert Group, a special forces unit established in 1940 that specialised in reconnaissance. For six months the partnership flourished until in June 1942 Stirling acquired a fleet of American jeeps, newly arrived in Egypt, that enabled the SAS to become self-sufficient and facilitated a change in tactics. Now they drove onto airfields in their heavily armoured jeeps, machine guns blazing. In July alone they destroyed 86 enemy aircraft and nearly 50 vehicles. Nearly 30 of those planes went up in flames on a raid at Sidi Haneish. "The engines roared and we drove onto the perfect surface of the airfield," recalled Cooper of the attack. "The blasting began. It was not long before the whole aerodrome was ablaze."

In September 1942 Stirling was promoted Lieutenant-Colonel and the SAS expanded from a detachment to a regiment with a fighting strength of 29 officers and 572 other ranks. Not only had the SAS been transformed but so had its leader; in the Guards he had been nicknamed the 'Giant Sloth' by his peers on account of his inertia. By the end of 1942 he was known as the Phantom Major. But his luck ran out in January 1943 when he was captured in Tunisia by a company of German paratroopers whose task was to hunt down the SAS and the LRDG.

Stirling spent the rest of the war as a prisoner, and he was in the infamous Colditz Castle when he was finally repatriated in April 1945. He returned to Britain to discover that the SAS, which less than four years earlier had been a detachment of six officers and 66 men had grown into a brigade numbering 2,500 soldiers including two French regiments and a squadron of Belgians.

Stirling's first port of call was the family estate in central Scotland, where he was welcomed home by the local newspaper. "Colonel Stirling's desert exploits against the enemy were as daring and brilliant in execution as the adventures of an Ouida hero in modern battle-dress," gushed the *Stirling Observer* in its edition of 26 April. "With a handful of picked men, he carried out a vast campaign of wrecking and destruction far behind Rommel's forward positions, destroying more than 200 enemy aircraft on the ground, burning up scores of transport and killing many Germans and Italians. His exploits form one of the war epics."

Despite its achievements in North Africa and later Europe, the SAS was disbanded in October 1945 by the new government led by Clement Attlee. He believed there would be no need for a force such as the SAS post-war. Events soon proved him wrong as the British Empire began to break up and communist insurgencies - and later terrorism - erupted around the world. The SAS have been involved in many of these conflicts, always adhering to David Stirling's motto of Who Dares Wins. ○

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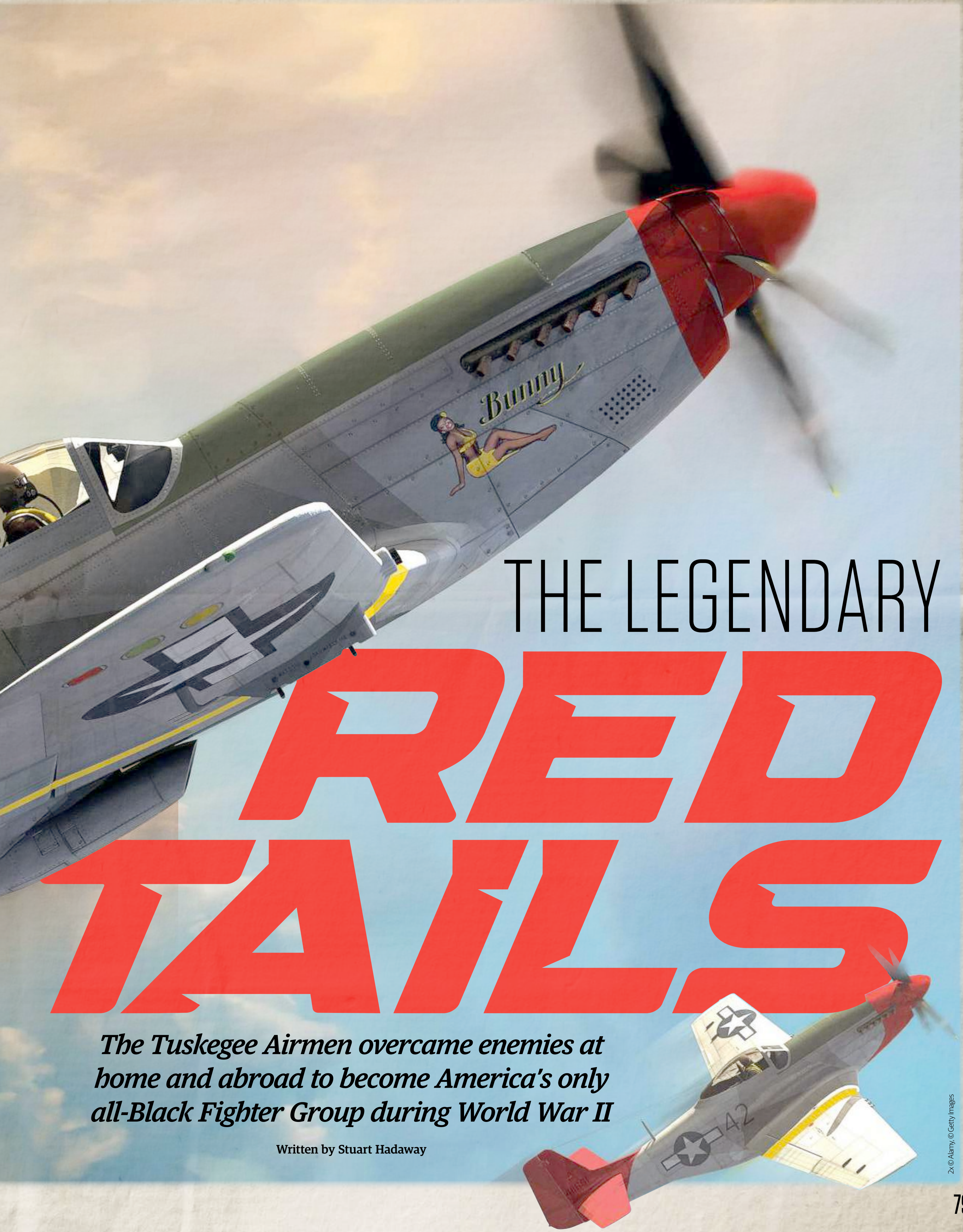


THE LEGENDARY RED TAILS

The Tuskegee Airmen overcame enemies at home and abroad to become America's only all-Black Fighter Group during World War II

Written by Stuart Hadaway

2x © Alamy, © Getty Images

It's not unusual for military formations to have to fight for the resources they need, or perhaps convince hidebound superiors of the validity of new technologies or techniques. Few, however, have ever faced a fight such as the African-American Tuskegee Airmen had to undertake to justify their very right to exist and serve their country.

Despite the "self-evident" facts declared in 1776 that "all men are created equal", the United States of America was riven with racism and prejudice in the 1940s. Segregation was normal in many areas and was rigidly, often violently enforced. African-Americans and other minorities were treated as second-class citizens, with the same nominal rights as white Americans but the clear understanding that they were not the same. Black troops had fought well from the American Civil War to World War I, but bigotry led to moves in the 1920s to limit Black military involvement. Even as America rebuilt its armed forces in the late 1930s, and war in both Europe and the Far East loomed, this vast pool of manpower was dismissed as fit for little more than menial work. When the Civilian Pilot Training (CPT) programme was established in 1938 to train some 20,000 college students for a year as civil pilots to be a ready-made reserve in wartime, it was limited to whites only. It took a further year for the scheme to be extended to Black colleges. Several were authorised to provide basic training and primary flight training, but all advanced training was to be conducted at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama.

The Institute was founded in 1881 as the Tuskegee Normal School for Colored Teachers by Lewis Adams, a former slave, and George Campbell, a businessman and former slave-owner. Their aim was to improve education standards across the African-American community by training Black teachers, and over time (especially in the inter-war period) the Institute expanded into more vocational and technical subjects. The school still survives today, as the Tuskegee University.

The first CPT entrants began to arrive at Tuskegee in January 1940, and qualified over the summer and autumn. That September, the US introduced the 'draft', calling up selected young men for compulsory military service. But the US Army Air Force (USAAF) did not have any Black flying units and, as numbers of qualified pilots from Tuskegee grew, there was increasing pressure to create such a unit to take advantage of this new resource. A Black unit was finally authorised in December 1940; it would be totally segregated with entirely Black personnel (beyond a few senior white officers and instructors). The aircrew were trained at the newly formed Tuskegee Army Air Force base, and the Black ground crews at Chanute Field, Illinois. Designated the 99th Pursuit (later Fighter) Squadron, the unit would take 15 months to achieve even limited operational status, as obstacles were constantly thrown in its path. It took nearly a year to complete the facilities at the airfield, while prospective trainees found enlisting far harder than they had anticipated.

> "WE CALLED THEM THE RED TAILS. BOY, WE FELT GOOD WHEN THE RED TAILS WERE WITH US"

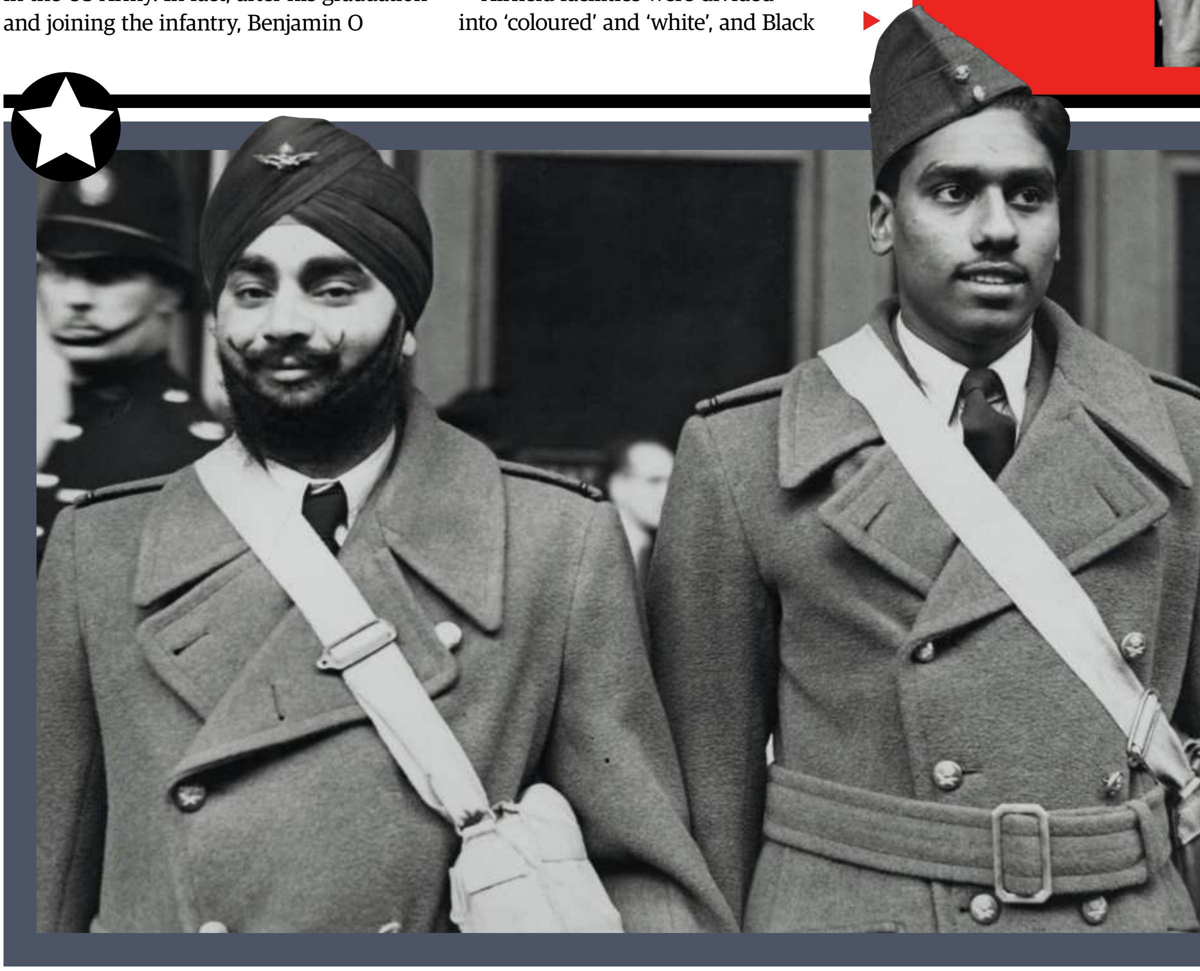
One of the first volunteers was Benjamin O Davis Jnr, a graduate of the US Military Academy at West Point (where his time had been a constant struggle against racism), and son of the only Black general in the US Army. In fact, after his graduation and joining the infantry, Benjamin O Davis Snr and Jnr were the only two Black officers in the US Army outside the Chaplains Department. Davis applied for flight training and was sent to Fort Riley, Kansas, for assessment. He would later recall: "The flight surgeon who gave me the exam did what all flight surgeons were doing when they had Black applicants. He wrote down that I had epilepsy, and I was not qualified for flying training." Such tricks were far from uncommon, with many officers and officials at all levels doubting that African-Americans had the intelligence or aptitude to make good pilots. Davis was then sent to an air base in Alabama for re-testing, and passed. He and 12 others arrived at Tuskegee in July 1941 to form the first class and start training. Five would successfully qualify the following March, followed by more classes over the coming months.

On base, the pilots faced segregation and prejudice. George Boyd, who would go on to serve until 1970 and see combat in the Korean and Vietnam Wars, recalled: "There were certain things you did based on custom and what was safe… That was part of growing up Black… You were afraid of doing something that'd get you harmed even though you weren't breaking the law."

Airfield facilities were divided into 'coloured' and 'white', and Black ▶

RIGHT A P-51C Mustang painted in the distinctive Red Tail markings of the 332nd Fighter Group - the Tuskegee Airmen

BELOW-RIGHT Ground crews were also Black, and faced the same difficulties as the aircrew. Racial prejudice and entry requirements stacked against Black personnel to deter applicants perversely led to a very high standard of technical staff



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TUSKEGEE

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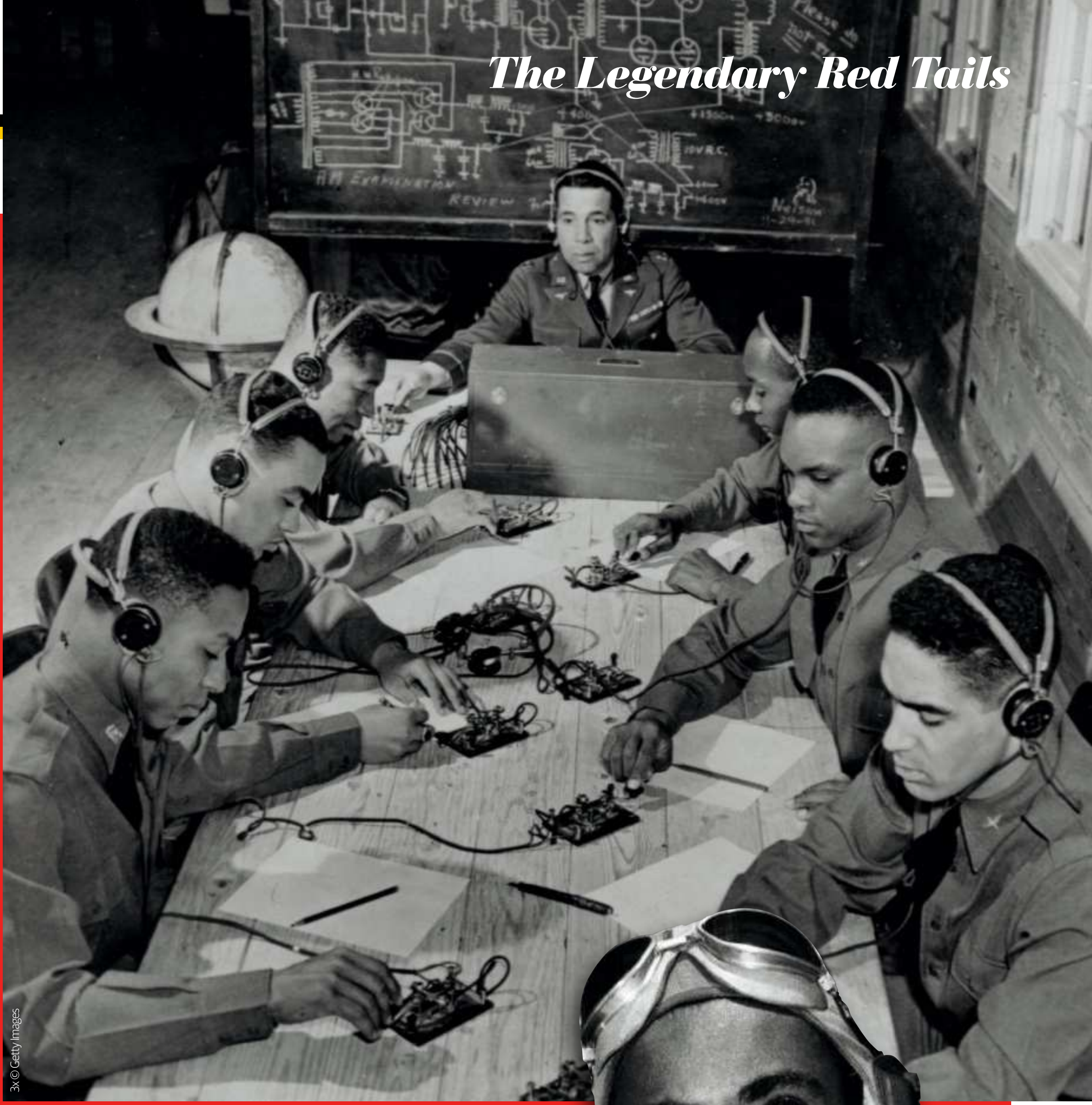
Image source: wiki/National Archives



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ABOVE Trainee airmen undergoing Morse Code training at Tuskegee Army Air Force base

RIGHT Second Lieutenant Oliver O Miller, 1943

BEING BLACK IN BRITAIN

The British took a very different approach to Black and ethnic minority personnel

Although the Royal Air Force (and its precursor, the Royal Flying Corps) had had several Indian and West Indian officers serve during World War I, during the inter-war period a 'colour-bar' had operated, banning officers of 'non-European descent'. This was lifted in October 1939, and hundreds of Black and Asian personnel would serve as aircrew, and thousands as ground crew, during the war. Primarily from the West Indies, men and women also came from India, Africa, and even Burma and China. All were fully integrated into their units and their crews, and there were no restrictions on their receiving command positions. However, there were some restrictions to prevent ethnic minority personnel being posted to areas where they might face racial discrimination such as the United States of America or the Union of South Africa.

When American forces began arriving in Britain in 1942, British society was welcoming to all, often to the dismay of US authorities. Attempts to enforce racial segregation in pubs and other recreational facilities near American bases were often met with obstruction and outright hostility by local people, and by the members of the British armed forces. On more than one occasion rioting and violence broke out when American military police attempted to enforce racist policies that the British neither recognised nor wanted.

personnel were banned from the latter. Thankfully for the trainees, base commander Lieutenant Colonel Noel Parrish was a supporter of equality and did all he could to impose fair treatment and mitigate the worst of the bigotry, integrating facilities as much as possible.

The 99th Fighter Squadron (FS) became operational in July 1942, commanded by the newly promoted Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin Davis. Over the following months they built up their strength and experience, flying worn-out Curtiss P-40 Warhawks. As more pilots graduated, the 100th Fighter Squadron also began to form. In March 1943 the 99th FS was ready for deployment, and in April it arrived in Casablanca, Morocco. After two months operational training, the squadron joined the 33rd Fighter Group (FG).

The 33rd FG was commanded by Colonel William Momyer, who made no secret of his disapproval of the 99th. Despite the Group's four squadrons all operating from the same base, Momyer ignored the 99th FS and isolated them as much as possible. Despite this hostile welcome the 99th FS went into combat over the Mediterranean island of Pantelleria in June, conducting dive-bombing and ground-attack sorties, and escorting medium bombers. At the end of June the squadron was relieved to leave the 33rd FG, joining the rather more welcoming 324th FG to take part in the invasion of Sicily. Again, the squadron flew ground attack and escort sorties, and

TUSKEGEE AIRMEN
1941
1945

© Alamy

THE TUSKEGEE BOMBER BOYS

Less famous than the legendary Red Tails, there was also a Black Bomb Group

While the 332nd Fighter Group are the best-known of the Tuskegee airmen, there was also the 477th Bombardment Group (BG). Formed in January 1944 at Selfridge Army Air Field, Michigan, the unit moved several times. The unit never saw combat with the enemy, but instead became embroiled in constant conflict with its own side. Always understrength, not least because of long delays in authorising the training of Black personnel as navigators and bomb-aimers, the Group's own chain of command was determined that it would not be a success.

Colonel Robert Selway, who had briefly commanded the 332nd FG, was the commander of the new Group, and he went to great lengths to enforce segregation and the isolation of the Black crews. In this he was supported by the commander of the First Air Force, General Frank Hunter, who was an ardent segregationist, while even General Hap Arnold, commander of the USAAF, was against the unit from the start. In December 1944, at Freeman Field, Indiana, Selway attempted to formalise the unofficial segregation on the base, in contravention of Army regulations, leading to over 100 Black officers refusing orders and being arrested. A Committee on Special Troop Policies investigated the matter. All but three were released without charge, and only one of them was convicted of a military crime. Soon after, Benjamin O Davis was brought from the 332nd FG to take command of the 477th. The Group was treated better from then on.

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TOP A class of airmen await their 'Wings' as a symbol of their qualification. Due to the facilities at Tuskegee, each class was small

ABOVE-LEFT Airmen getting navigation training. All instructors were white to begin with, until enough Black officers were deemed to have the necessary skills and experience

ABOVE-MIDDLE In March 2007 over 300 surviving Tuskegee Airmen gathered to be awarded the Congressional Gold Medal for their extraordinary contributions to their country

ABOVE-RIGHT Tuskegee Airmen being briefed for an operation in Italy, March 1945

on 2 July they achieved their first aerial victory when Lieutenant Charles Hall shot down a German Focke-Wulf Fw 190. They completed a total of 175 combat sorties over Sicily in just 10 days and were awarded a Distinguished Unit Citation for their efforts.

On 19 July 1943, the 99th FS was posted back to the 33rd FG, and the unit started perhaps the hardest part of their war. Again ostracised by their commander and the rest of the Group, in September they also lost their excellent commanding officer when Davis was posted back to the US to take command of the newly forming 332nd FG, composed entirely of Black units. That same month, Colonel Momyer wrote a damning report on the performance of the 99th FS, which went all the way to the top. Eventually the Chief of Staff of the US Army, General George C Marshall, ordered the War Department to investigate Momyer's accusations of poor performance. It would take five months for the investigation, which exonerated the 99th FS on all counts, to be published.

In October some relief came as the 99th FS was again posted, to the 79th FG. Here they received a warm welcome from Colonel Earl Bates who, in stark contrast to Momyer, extended every courtesy and facility to the squadron. The units became fully integrated, even to the extent that 99th FS pilots led flights and formations, something that Momyer had forbidden as it put white personnel under the command of Black men. However, poor weather and monotonous patrols slowly eroded morale, as did the lack of further air-to-air combat success. To make matters worse, the unit was given apparently lesser duties during the landings at Anzio in January 1944, flying patrols over the invasion fleet rather than on the front lines. This duty was turned to stunning advantage on 27 January, when 15 Fw 190s were spotted attacking Allied shipping. The 99th FS intercepted them and despite being heavily outclassed by the newer, faster Fw 190s the Tuskegee men in their aged P-40s shot down five enemy aircraft and damaged five more, for the loss of two of their own. The following day, three more German aircraft were shot down, and morale in the 99th FS rocketed. They had proved their worth as fighter pilots.

Their run of luck continued through February, and in March they were delighted to be posted back to the 324th FG. They shared in the Group's successes over Anzio and Monte Cassino, and in their resulting Distinguished Unit Citation. Then, in June, came a move that was strangely not as popular as might have been expected.

In January 1944, the 332nd FG had arrived in Europe, consisting of the 100th, 301st and 302nd FSs. All of them were Black units, drawn from some of the nearly 1,000 Black airmen trained at Tuskegee through the war. Equipped with the obsolete Bell P-39 Airacobra, they had been relegated to coastal patrols until May 1944, when they started to re-equip with the modern Republic P-47 Thunderbolt. The 99th FS gave up their P-40s to receive P-47s as they joined the Group, but despite this many pilots were discontented. They had been proving themselves as part of otherwise all-white units, and saw being sent to the all-Black 332nd FG as a step backwards, a reinforcement of the military's segregation policies.

The 332nd FG were one of four FGs in the Fifteenth Air Force. Each FG had a different pattern on their tails for recognition, and the 332nd's all-red tail markings led to their new nickname: the Red Tails. They were engaged on a mixture of tactical operations, supporting ground units in Italy and the Balkans (even supporting Red Army units in the latter), and strategic operations escorting heavy bombers over France, Italy, Romania, the Balkans and into Germany itself. In July 1944, the Group began converting aircraft type again, receiving North American P-51C Mustangs.

> "THAT WAS PART OF GROWING UP BLACK… YOU WERE AFRAID OF DOING SOMETHING… EVEN THOUGH YOU WEREN'T BREAKING THE LAW"

The Red Tails really began to win a reputation during the escort operations that made up over half of their tasks. The heavy bombers of the Fifteenth Air Force flew long distances, with the various FGs providing escort on different parts of the routes. The Red Tails soon gained a name for themselves as efficient escorts. GC Barnett, a B-24 Liberator co-pilot, recalled: "Maybe we should've called them the Red Barons, but we called them the Red Tails. They were always in position where we thought fighter escort should be, not too far out, and not too close – right out where we liked to see them… Boy, we felt good when the Red Tails were with us."

Escorting was unglamorous work and required strict discipline. The fighters needed to stick with the bombers, seeing off enemy fighters without getting drawn off by them and leaving the bombers undefended. The Red Tails developed a reputation for not being easily drawn away. This meant that their overall aerial victory rate remained relatively low, but they kept their bombers safer. There is a myth that the Red Tails never lost a bomber they were escorting but this is not true – at least 27 can be traced as lost on their watch, including 15 on 18 July 1944 alone. However, from 24 August 1944 through to 24 March 1945 the Red Tails did fly over 100 bomber escort operations without losing a bomber, which was no mean feat.

A high point of the Red Tails' service came on 24 March 1945, with the longest distance raid ever flown by the Fifteenth Air Force: a 2,600km round trip to Berlin. The Red Tails were due to take over escort duties for the last leg of the outward trip, handing over to the next FG as they reached Berlin. In fact, the relief escorts did not show up, and Davis opted to remain with the bombers as they made their bombing run over the German capital. There, the formation was attacked by Messerschmitt Me.262 jet fighters and the Red Tails downed three of them in the ensuing dogfight. For their performance, the 332nd earned their first (but the 99th FS's third) Distinguished Unit Citation.

After the end of the war, the 332nd FG returned to the US and was deactivated, with the 99th FS joining the 477th BG to form the 447th Composite Group, under Davis' command. They now faced fresh prejudice and discrimination. Jefferson Alexander had been a POW, and had found that the Nazis had treated him just like any other US officer. He now found himself being denied the use of the 1st Class carriages on trains, an experience shared by many others, regardless of their uniforms, medals and war service.

However, in part due to their service, things were changing. When the United States Air Force became an independent service in 1947, it lost no time in beginning the process of de-segregating. Integration became official USAF policy in 1948, even before President Truman announced that it would be introduced across the armed forces. Some of the Tuskegee airmen would go on to illustrious careers in the USAF. Davis, for example, became its first Black general, commanding a wing in the Korean War, then holding higher command in Europe. More still left the military, and with their training, experiences and confidence joined the growing Civil Rights movement. In 2007 the Tuskegee Airmen were presented with the Congressional Gold Medal, in recognition of their service. ○

8 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT

BLITZ KRIEG

The secrets of Germany's devastating military tactics in World War II revealed

Written by Dr Stephen Hart and Dr Russell Hart

During September 1939 to June 1940 the German armed forces (Wehrmacht) achieved three decisive Blitzkrieg ('lightning war') successes. First, in just 36 days during September to October 1939 the Germans, aided by the Soviets, conquered Poland. Second, during 60 days' combat in April-June 1940, German forces conquered Denmark and Norway, while also repelling an Anglo-French intervention. Finally, in just 47 days of fighting during May to June 1940 the Wehrmacht astonishingly conquered France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg, while also driving the British Expeditionary Force back onto English soil. But here are some things you likely didn't know about Blitzkrieg and why it succeeded.

ABOVE German mechanised forces on a victory parade through Warsaw in 1939

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EDITORS
DR STEPHEN HART AND DR RUSSELL HART
BLITZKRIEG
THE INVASION OF POLAND TO THE FALL OF FRANCE

BLITZKRIEG:
The Invasion Of Poland To The Fall Of France
edited by Dr Stephen Hart and Dr Russell Hart is available now from Osprey Publishing

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ABOVE German Stuka dive-bombers over Poland in 1939

1

THERE WAS NO SUCH THING AS 'BLITZKRIEG' WARFARE

Western journalists first coined the phrase Blitzkrieg during autumn 1939 to describe the fast-paced German mechanised operations seen in the Polish campaign, but it was not a term used in German military thought. Throughout World War II the key German doctrinal work remained *The Command of Troops* (1936). Later, as the Western Allies tried to comprehend these early German triumphs in the war, they became fixated with what they viewed as the revolutionary German military doctrine of Blitzkrieg, seemingly built around massed armour and Stuka dive-bombers.

But what did the term Blitzkrieg actually identify? It described an operational method that utilised rapid, strategically concentrated all-arms armoured forces. Blitzkrieg envisaged that spearhead ground formations, backed by air strikes, would quickly break through the enemy's border defences by exploiting surprise, shock, speed and mobility. Once the panzer divisions had smashed through these initial defences, they would conduct fast, bold, risk-embracing strategic deep-penetration operations. These swift armoured advances deep into enemy territory, ignoring exposed flanks, would overrun enemy rear-area headquarters, depots, transport nodes and reserve forces' assembly areas. This would inflict dislocation, paralysis and shock on the enemy. The tempo and momentum that the German panzer divisions developed were greater than that achieved by their enemies. The rapid execution of German operations enabled their forces not only to generate tempo and momentum, but also to get inside their enemies' decision-making cycles. This helped paralyse their enemies' reactions, largely by rendering any response out-of-date.

Instead of being a widely accepted German doctrinal approach, Blitzkrieg was an operational method developed by just a few forward-looking commanders (like Heinz Guderian and Erwin Rommel). In these campaigns - particularly the 1940 Western one - these apostles of fast-paced mobile operations proved the validity of their radical vision by securing success in battle. These triumphs were secured despite the qualms of the more conservative German commanders. These officers remained worried about the vulnerable flanks these rapid panzer advances created; to mitigate this risk senior commanders tried to halt the panzer advance. But such risk-aversion violated the key tenets of Blitzkrieg. Only by continuing to advance quickly could the panzers keep generating surprise, momentum and tempo while remaining inside the enemy's decision-making cycle. The exposed German flanks were not a problem if the enemy was too overwhelmed to counter-attack these flanks. This offensive approach was what the term Blitzkrieg referred to.

2

HITLER'S RECKLESSNESS WAS KEY TO SUCCESS

The key event that led to Germany's implementation of Blitzkrieg in 1939-40 was the rise to power of Hitler's Nazi Party in 1933. The violently nationalistic, militaristic, racist and anti-Semitic Nazi movement, led by Adolf Hitler, adopted foreign policy objectives that were very different to those of Weimar Germany. Hitler viewed war as the Nazi state's preferred policy instrument in its drive for territorial expansion. The Nazis wished to regain the 'German' lands lost in the 1919 Versailles Treaty, and also to conquer eastern Europe to provide 'Living Space' for an economically self-sufficient future German nation. Hitler needed an offensive military capability to deliver these aggressive foreign policy objectives.

Tossing aside the Versailles agreement, Hitler embarked on a massive German rearmament programme. The development of German mechanised formations from 1935 fitted nicely within the Nazi mind-set that raw offensive military power could be used to reshape Europe. Propelled forward by Hitler's fervent approval and by re-armament, during 1935 the German Army formed its first three panzer (armoured) divisions. These were well-balanced formations, built around a brigade of tanks, together with motorised infantry, semi-motorised artillery and anti-tank guns, as well as other mobile supporting arms (such as engineers, recce forces and a Luftwaffe air-support liaison detachment).

In addition, a key element to the advent of Blitzkrieg was Hitler's reckless and optimistic commitment of Germany to war. The German military had not performed impressively during its 1938-39 movements into the Sudetenland, Austria and Bohemia-Moravia. This led many senior German commanders to doubt the overall capabilities of the armed forces; ignoring such doubts, Hitler argued that Germany's enemies were even less well-prepared for conflict and recklessly committed Germany to war against Poland in September 1939.

3 THE TACTIC WASN'T INFALLIBLE

Although capable of delivering rapid, decisive victories against unprepared opponents, Blitzkrieg remained a very demanding form of offensive warfare. The tactic had inherent flaws that were obscured by the Germans' triumphs of 1939-40 and subsequent Allied operations targeted with increasing effectiveness the deficiencies within Blitzkrieg. Success for the German forces depended on surprise, momentum, swift decision-cycles, adequate resupply, appropriate all-arms and inter-service co-operation, good situational awareness and flexibility. Increasingly, from late-1941 onwards, the battlefield situation altered and the Allies began to more effectively counteract and defeat this Blitzkrieg approach. The intended target of a Blitzkrieg attack 'merely' had to slow down the invasion to increase its chance of not losing. In contrast, the Germans had to maintain their grip on the initiative and keep generating and exploiting surprise and momentum if they were to have any chance of victory.

To successfully maintain tempo and momentum the Germans had to exploit fleeting opportunities (such as an unguarded bridge). They also needed to avoid, outflank or encircle enemy reserves. This placed particular demands on appropriate situational awareness and effective sub-unit leadership. If the Germans lacked adequate command tanks and scouting aircraft to allow their spearhead commanders to obtain sufficient situational awareness, Blitzkrieg success was much harder. German command of the skies was therefore a crucial part of Blitzkrieg operations; it enabled aircraft to provide fire-support for the contact battle, rear-area interdiction, air assault, air reconnaissance and air transport missions. Once the Allied forces began to wrest air superiority away from the Germans, Blitzkrieg attacks became increasingly difficult to pull off.

Blitzkrieg forces also needed an appropriate force structure, but throughout the war the Germans never enjoyed an entirely adequate force structure and weapons inventory. In Poland, for example, Germany's panzer formations lacked adequate numbers of half-tracked armoured personnel carriers, mobile artillery and the heavier combat tanks. For most of the war, moreover, the panzer divisions only fielded limited numbers of self-propelled artillery pieces. As the Allies increasingly harnessed their industrial might, they gradually created force structures and weapon strengths that eventually surpassed the Germans' as the building blocks for Blitzkrieg-style operations.

One final limitation of Blitzkrieg was that the rapid speed and large scale of the German advances placed enormous strain on their logistical resupply structures. The Germans struggled to deliver effective logistical sustainment of operations even when strategic victory required just a few envelopment or encirclement operations (known as 'cauldron battles'), as in Poland (1939) and the West (1940). When during 1941 strategic defeat of the Soviets required a dozen envelopment operations, the sheer scale of the battle-space made it impossible for the Germans to adequately resupply their forces long enough for them to reach strategic victory over the enemy.

4 BLITZKRIEG WASN'T A NEW IDEA

The armed forces defeated by the Blitzkrieg of 1939-40 believed that they had been overwhelmed by a revolutionary form of warfare. In reality, the successful German strategic and operational approaches utilised during the 1939-40 campaigns was more of an evolution of traditional Prussian/German practice than it was revolutionary. Firstly, Blitzkrieg attempted to implement the traditional Prussian/German strategic approach of deep penetration operations, envelopment and encirclement movements, and the 'decisive battle of annihilation', as epitomised by the 1914 Schlieffen Plan.

Secondly, the doctrinal roots of Blitzkrieg lay in the belligerents' experiences of the 1914-18 Great War. Ideas about future mobile warfare arose out of the costly impasse of trench stalemate that emerged on the Western Front. One such precursor was the German development and use of 'Storm Troop' tactics during 1917-18. Elite 'Storm Troop' units, powerfully reinforced with organic fire-power, used infiltration tactics to enter enemy trenches by surprise and overcome the defenders. These 'Storm Troop' units relied upon offensive speed and flexibility to confuse, paralyse and out-manoeuvre the enemy. The panzer divisions – well-balanced all-arms armoured formations – that spearheaded Blitzkrieg were the late-1930s doctrinal descendent of such 'Storm Troop' tactics.

ABOVE The speed and ferocity of Germany's tank offensives were key to their early success

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5 STRUCTURAL WEAKNESSES AMONG THE ALLIES ALLOWED IT TO WORK

The German 1939-40 Blitzkrieg campaigns achieved decisive success by effectively exploiting some or all of the following Allied flaws or deficiencies: strategic mal-deployment; slow, centrally directed command/control and decision cycles; and poor all-arms, inter-service and inter-Allied co-operation. The German invasion of Poland effectively exploited the latter's strategic mal-deployment. Having to defend their nation on four sides, while in particular resisting any German assault from the west to shield its key assembly areas, left the Poles vulnerable to German envelopment operations from the north and south. Likewise, in the 1940 Western campaign the German plan effectively exploited Allied strategic mal-deployment. The powerful German secondary push into Belgium and the Netherlands triggered the Allied Dyle-Breda Plan, sucking France's strategic reserves north and, through combat, fixing them there. Meanwhile, the German feints against the Maginot Line defences fixed powerful French forces in the south. Then the Germans executed the killer blow in the weakly defended Allied centre. Here, massed German armour infiltrated through the Ardennes, smashed their way across the River Meuse and raced toward the English Channel coast, cutting the Allied front line into two.

By operating at such a high tempo, the Germans got inside the slower Allied decision-making cycle. The Allies executed centralised top-down command systems, where distant senior commanders struggled to react swiftly enough to German actions. Equally Allied doctrine - such as the French Army's firepower-reliant concept of the 'Methodical Battle' - operated at a lower tempo and momentum than Blitzkrieg, meaning the Allies were always trying to catch up with the more rapidly unfolding German actions. Allied inter-service cooperation, most notably air support for the ground forces, was less effective than the Germans'. Finally, in the 1940 Western campaign the Germans exploited the politico-military tensions that existed between the five Allied belligerents that significantly weakened Allied resistance.

6 THE TACTIC BENEFITTED FROM YEARS OF PREPARATION

During 1918-1939 the German Army (Reichswehr) slowly evolved to a point where it could implement Blitzkrieg in 1939–40. This evolution reflected wider doctrinal developments around the world as a few far-sighted British, French, American and Soviet tacticians explored ways in which the tank - with its unique mix of fire-power, protection and mobility - could swiftly apply Storm Trooper tactics on a geographically larger scale to create mechanised warfare. The limitations the 1919 Versailles Treaty imposed on an emasculated, defensively minded Reichswehr compelled it to embrace innovation. During the 1920s the Reichswehr's doctrinal developments focussed on the use of speed, mobility and all-arms co-ordination to offset its numerical inferiority. The army transformed its obsolete cavalry divisions into a semi-motorised strategic reserve and conducted its first covert overseas tank research.

The key surge forward in the German military's peacetime journey toward Blitzkrieg occurred during the Nazi era (1933-39). The Nazis' desire to use war to achieve territorial gains triggered massive rearmament. This programme included the production of PzKpfw I and II light tanks, as well as the design of the heavier PzKpfw III and IV combat tanks. Subsequently, during 1935 the Reichswehr formed its first three panzer (armoured) divisions. Grouped under the XVI Corps (Motorised), this force became the world's first mechanised corps intended for strategic offensive operations. Subsequently, during 1936-39 the German Army - aided by its takeover of Czechoslovakia - further massively expanded its armoured force. By August 1939 the Germany Army fielded a total of 3,197 tanks, organised into six armoured, four light-mechanised, one cavalry and four motorised infantry divisions.

ABOVE-LEFT The achievements of Blitzkrieg were made possible in large part by a massive tank manufacturing operation

ABOVE-RIGHT Nazi forces making their way into Belgium

© Getty Images

7 MANY GERMAN OFFICERS DIDN'T UNDERSTAND IT

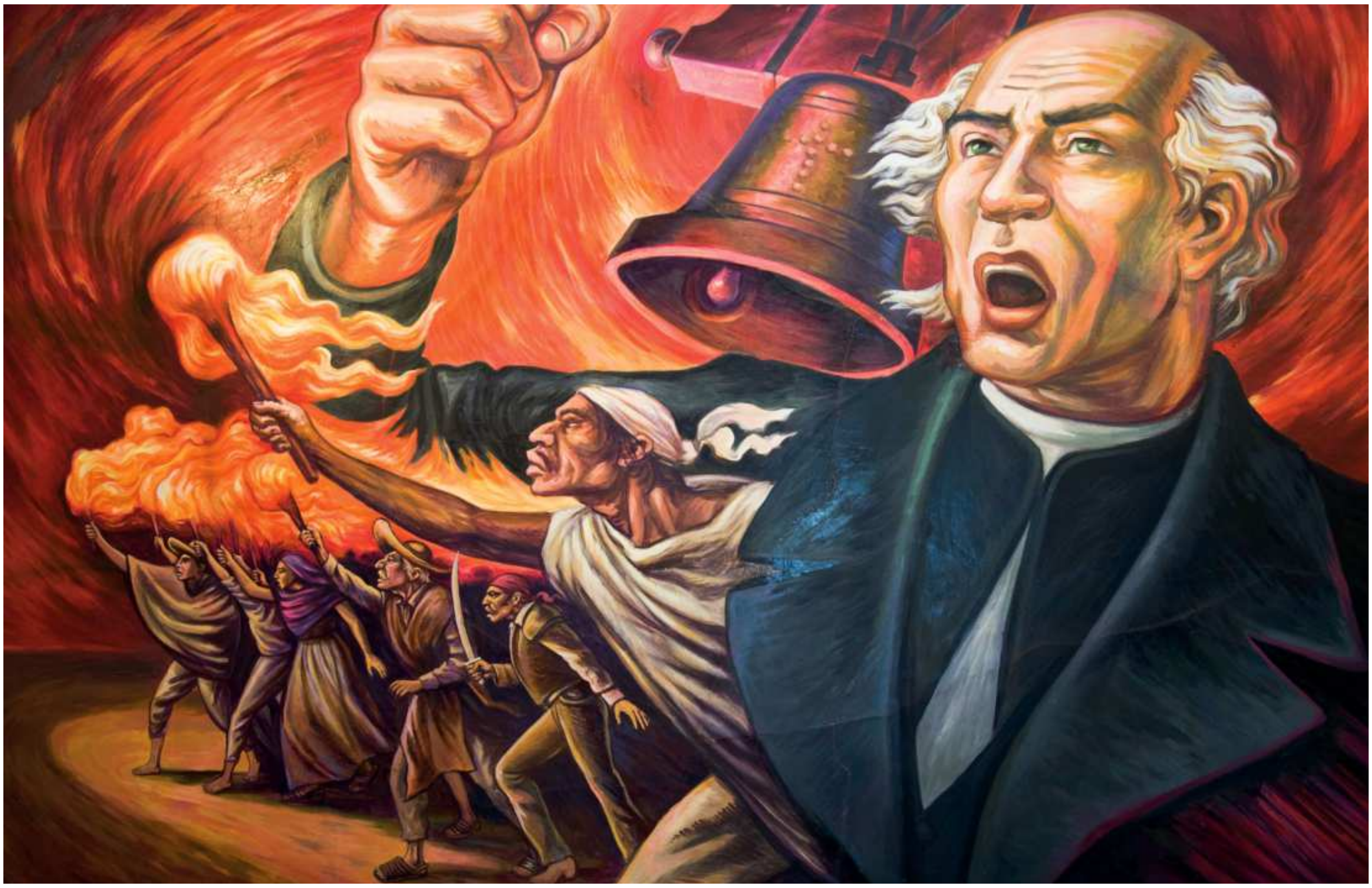
The devastating 1939-1940 Blitzkrieg successes were largely achieved by a few far-sighted apostles of fast-paced mobile warfare. As a partly novel and untested form of warfare, scepticism existed among the more experienced senior army and army-group level commanders; these officers' experiences of war were profoundly shaped by the gruelling slower-tempo battles of attrition that occurred on the Western Front during the Great War. These senior officers were not only sceptical about the prospects of decisive success through Blitzkrieg, they remained more tactically risk averse. Throughout the Polish and Western campaigns, senior commanders, like von Rundstedt and von Kleist, became deeply concerned about the vulnerable flanks created by the rapid panzer advances. Indeed, the Polish counter-offensive on the Bzura and the Anglo-French counter-strike at Arras sent shockwaves of concern through the more conservative senior officers, leading to temporary halt orders.

Moreover, the Western campaign was conceived as an operation to penetrate the Allied frontier defences and the Germans remained fuzzy as to precisely what they should do if and when they achieved a decisive operational breakthrough. Therefore, the rapid collapse and capitulation of France after six weeks surprised many within Germany, particularly since France had stubbornly held out for four years during the Great War. Even Hitler was surprised at the alacrity and totality of the Blitzkrieg triumph in the west. But then again, he was a reckless gambler who was willing and able to risk all in a massive, rapid offensive that overwhelmed his less well prepared, organised, motivated, trained and equipped opponents.

8 PANZAS AND STUKAS WEREN'T AS IMPORTANT AS PEOPLE THINK

Panzers (tanks) and Stukas (dive-bombers) were central elements of successful Blitzkrieg. Moreover, they were the most visible symbols of Blitzkrieg to those who fought against it. However, they were just two cogs in a much bigger machine and their role has been somewhat exaggerated. The panzer divisions' combat power lay not primarily in their mass of tanks but in them being well-balanced all-arms forces that combined tanks, motorised infantry, engineers, and motorised artillery operating on a fast-paced offensive doctrine. The rapier edge of the panzer divisions was further supported by well-equipped combined-arms infantry divisions and conventional artillery units. Additionally, the Luftwaffe provided a wide range of close air support, not just precision tactical strikes by Stukas but strafing attacks by fighters too. The Luftwaffe also undertook important aerial reconnaissance missions. Special forces, including the elite air landing glider and parachute air assault forces, also played central roles in helping the deep penetration of Allied defences before the enemy could react effectively.

BELOW A German tank outfitted with a flamethrower, part of the 44th Infantry Division of the Wehrmacht



RADICALS & GROUNDBREAKERS

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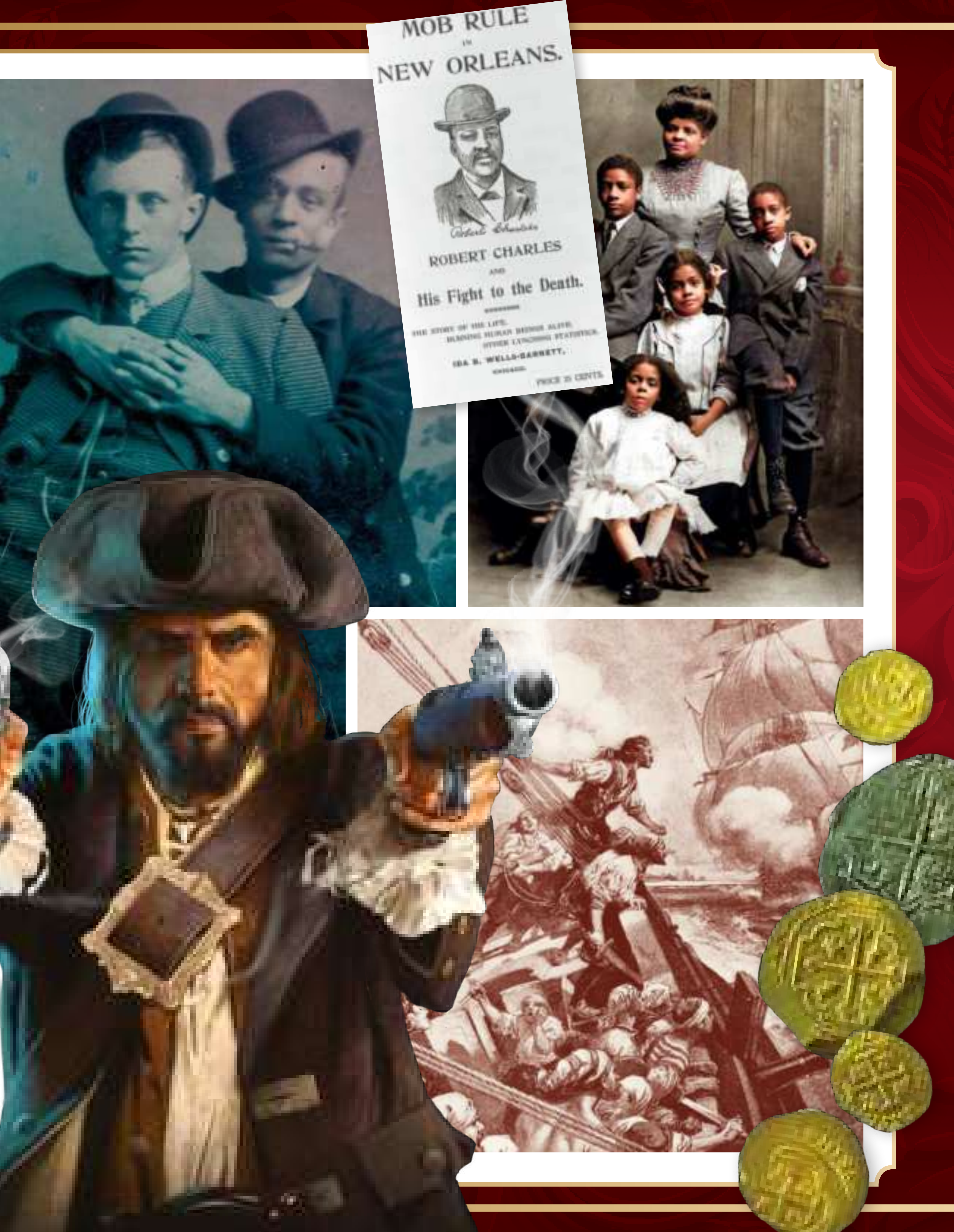

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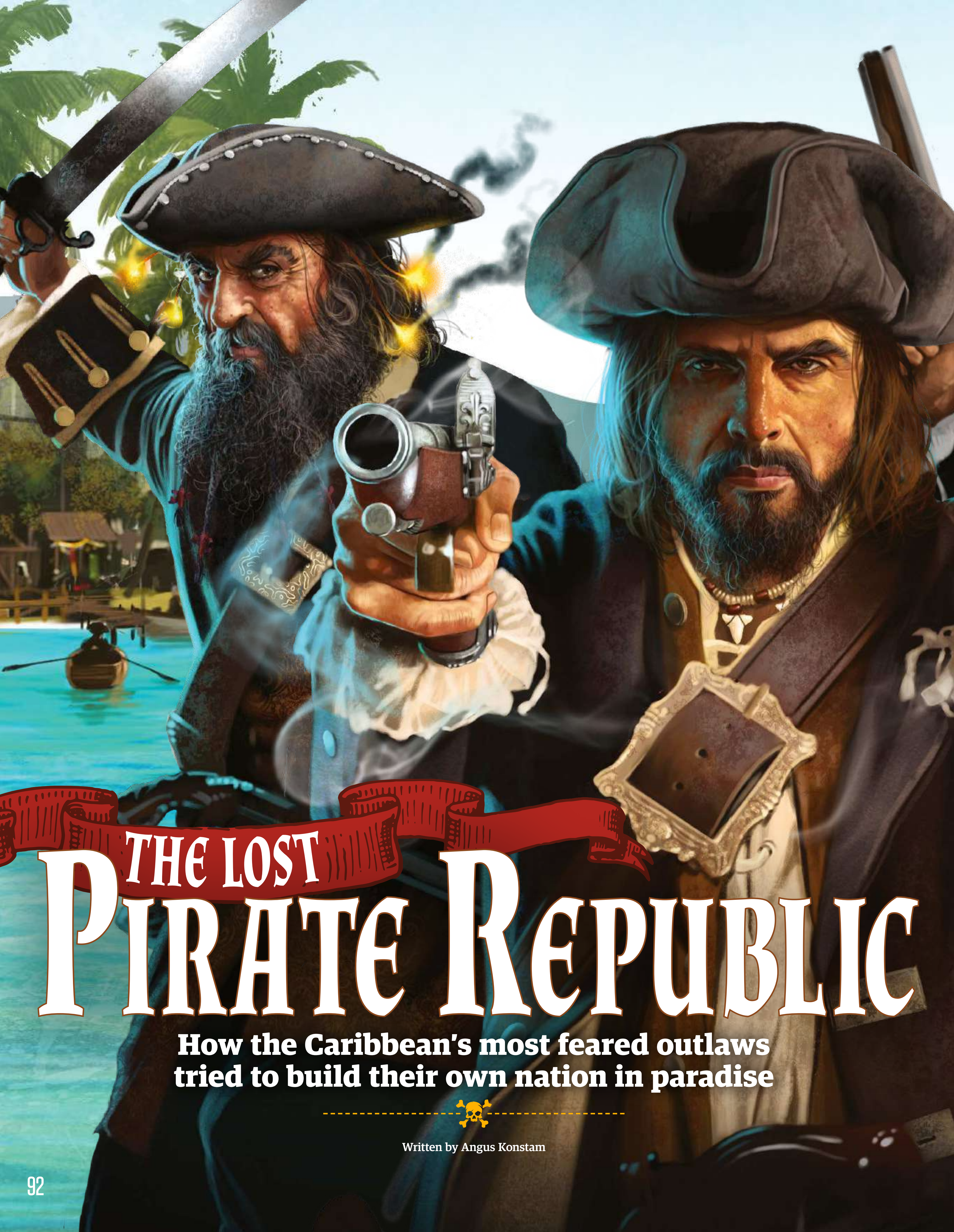


THE LOST PIRATE REPUBLIC

How the Caribbean's most feared outlaws tried to build their own nation in paradise

Written by Angus Konstam

Illustration by: Joe Cummings

During the early 18th century a major increase in piratical attacks occurred. It disrupted maritime trade in American waters and markedly drove up marine insurance rates. The first significant attacks began around 1714, and they continued for the best part of a decade. The economic impact was just part of the problem - this upsurge of piracy appeared to be self-perpetuating. Often, on ships captured by pirates some of the crew would volunteer to join the ranks of their assailants. These recruits increased the scale of the pirate problem, and soon the impact of piracy was being felt in other regions, such as off the West African coast and the Indian Ocean.

While this was devastating enough for the shipping industry in both Europe and the Americas, it also began to concern those in power. In a growing

The island of New Providence was large and fertile enough to support a small farming and plantation economy

HENRY JENNINGS

Unknown – c.1745

Jennings' raid on a wrecked Spanish treasure fleet helped to finance the pirate haven of Nassau when he joined up with Hornigold and his crews. Despite the bitter rivalry between the two captains, they managed to operate together as the 'Flying Gang' for a time. Like Hornigold, he accepted the royal pardon in 1718 and retired to Bermuda.

number of instances, captains whose ships had been attacked reported that the pirates had abused them, both physically and verbally, while accusing them of cruelty to their crew and to seamen in general. While this resentment towards authority was primarily directed at the captains, it was clear that it extended to national governments and even civilised society as a whole. It almost seemed as if once a seaman had become a pirate, he had rejected the very fabric of contemporary social order. This, of course, posed a threat to the existing establishment, both in Europe and its colonies. It also suggested that the pirate scourge had a radical element to it.

THE SPARK OF RADICALISM

One reason for this might possibly be traced to piracy's origin. In April 1713 the Treaty of Utrecht brought an end to the War of the Spanish Succession (1700-14). More to the point, it ended the war between France and Britain; peace with Spain would soon follow, but the war between France and Austria would continue until the following March. Word of the Utrecht treaty reached Jamaica followed by news that peace had also been agreed with Spain. The long-running war had been good for the island. For almost a decade-and-a-half the old Jamaican buccaneering haven of Port Royal had served as a base for British privateers – sea rovers who carried Letters of Marque empowering them to prey on enemy ships in time of war.

This had been extremely lucrative for the privateering captains and their crews, for the investors who provided the funding for their ventures, and for the British crown, which garnered 20 percent of the profits. Fortunes were made from this form of licenced piracy, and the only victims were the French and Spanish. The coming of peace, though, brought this profitable business to an abrupt end. Letters of Marque were now worthless, and the privateers suddenly found themselves out of a job.

Some found it hard to abandon their old ways. A number of them continued their attacks without the protection of licences and were duly branded as pirates. That meant that Port Royal was now closed to them and their kind, and they were forced to look elsewhere for a safe haven. Most, though, reluctantly signed on as crewmen on merchant ships. After the war the number of British

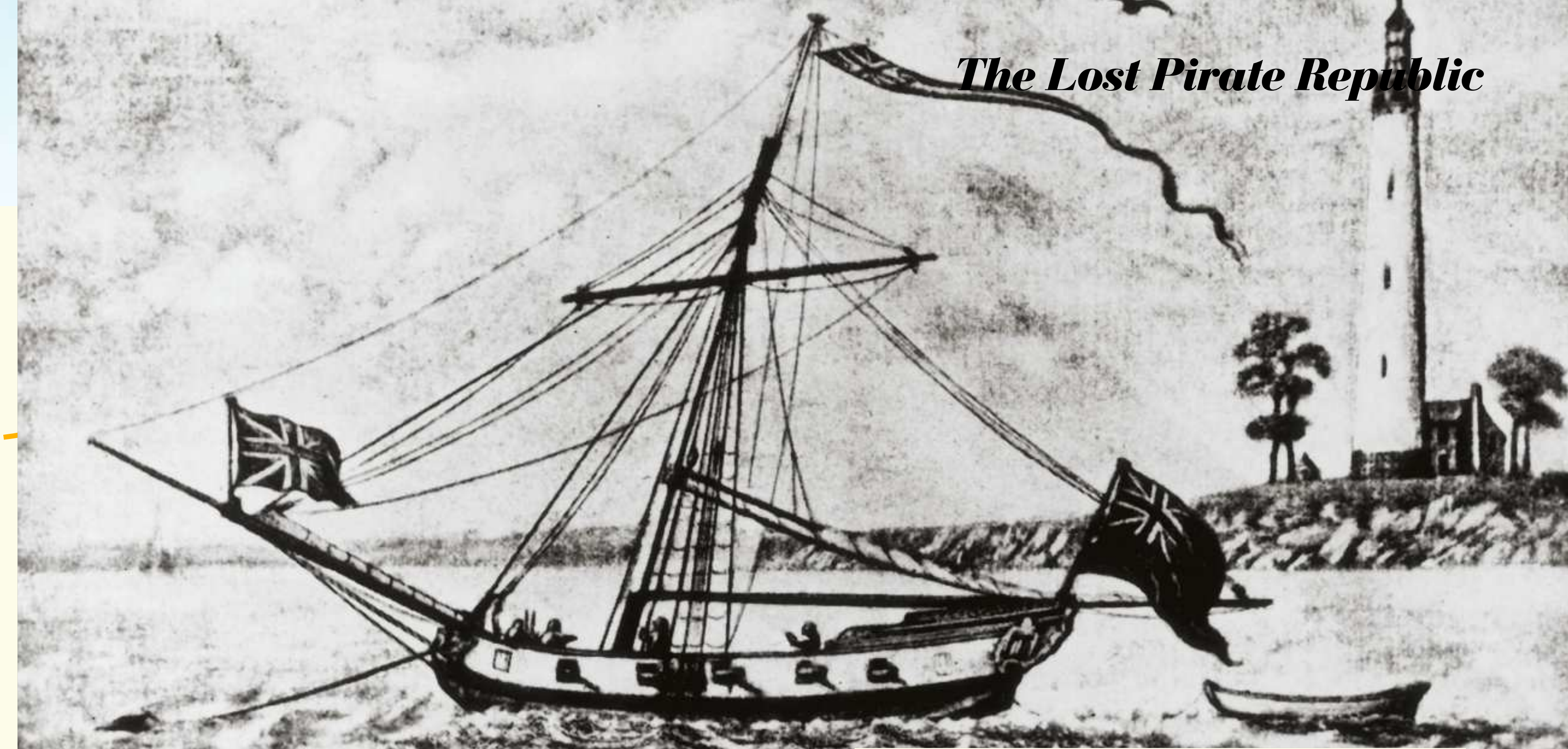
WHY NASSAU?

The Bahamas became a haven for pirates

The Bahamas were something of a backwater in this period. In the aftermath of their discovery by Columbus in 1492 they had been almost completely depopulated, as the Spanish used the archipelago as a source of slaves. The Spanish never made a serious attempt to colonise the islands but retained a claim to them until 1783. Although the French and the English tried to settle there, it was the English who made the first serious attempt, establishing themselves on the islands they called New Providence and Eleuthera. These settlers eked out a precarious living from fishing and farming and the settlements survived, despite the depredations of the Spanish, who saw the English as interlopers.

The largest settlement was Charles Town on New Providence, which in 1695 was renamed Nassau in honour of the Dutch-born King William III. An English governor was sent there too, and a fort was built to protect Nassau from further Spanish attacks. At the start of the War of the Spanish Succession in 1700 Nassau also became a minor base for English privateers. Neither move really helped – Nassau's fort was abandoned in 1703 after yet another Franco-Spanish attack and the privateers found safer havens. After that, the settlements were largely abandoned and by the end of the war in 1713 barely a hundred settlers remained.

This, though, made New Providence a perfect secluded pirate base. After all, the islands lay close to the busy shipping lanes of the Straits of Florida and the Bahamas Channel. It was here in late 1713 that the privateer-turned-pirate Benjamin Hornigold came and established himself in Nassau. With that, these sleepy islands were reinvented as a pirate lair.



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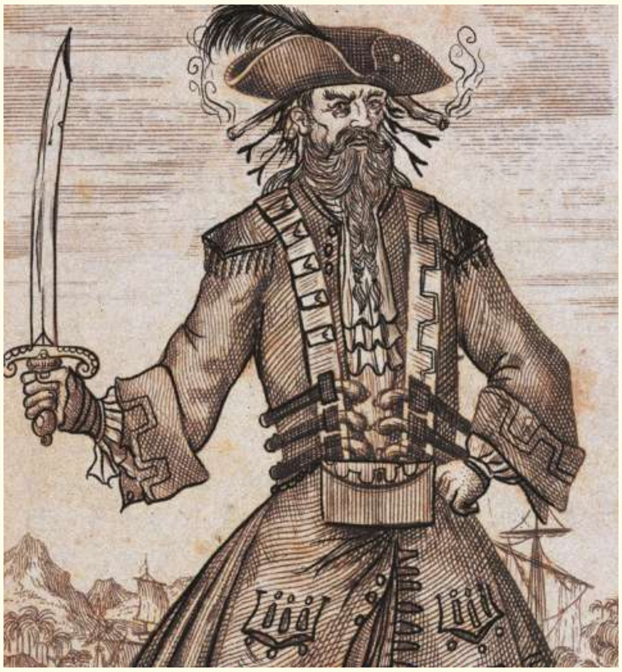
“PRIVATEERSMEN ENJOYED BETTER CONDITIONS THAN MERCHANT SEAMEN, AND COULD LOOK FORWARD TO A SHARE OF ANY PRIZE MONEY”

merchantmen increased markedly, and as the Jamaican economy returned to a peacetime footing there was no shortage of work. However, a few lucky former privateersmen, like Captain Henry Jennings, were employed by the Jamaican governor Lord Archibald Hamilton, who needed a small naval force to protect the island and its trade.

The trouble was, during their time as privateersmen these sailors had become used to a shipboard system far removed from that found on merchant ships. Privateersmen enjoyed better conditions than merchant seamen and could look forward to a share of any looted treasure and money. Now, after signing on to a merchant vessel, poor conditions and low pay were commonplace. Worse still was the authoritarian system on board, where the captain’s word was law and frequently harsh discipline was meted out on seamen at the captain’s command. Many sailors came to resent their new lot and yearned for their lost freedom. This, then, was the real spark that ignited the low-key radicalism that came to be associated with contemporary pirates.

SAM BELLAMY
1689 – 1717

Bellamy started his pirate career under Hornigold and Teach before getting his first command. Although he was only a pirate captain for around a year, ‘Black Sam’ managed to rob more than 50 ships and was celebrated as one of the most generous and merciful pirates of the time. He modelled himself on the English folklore character Robin Hood.



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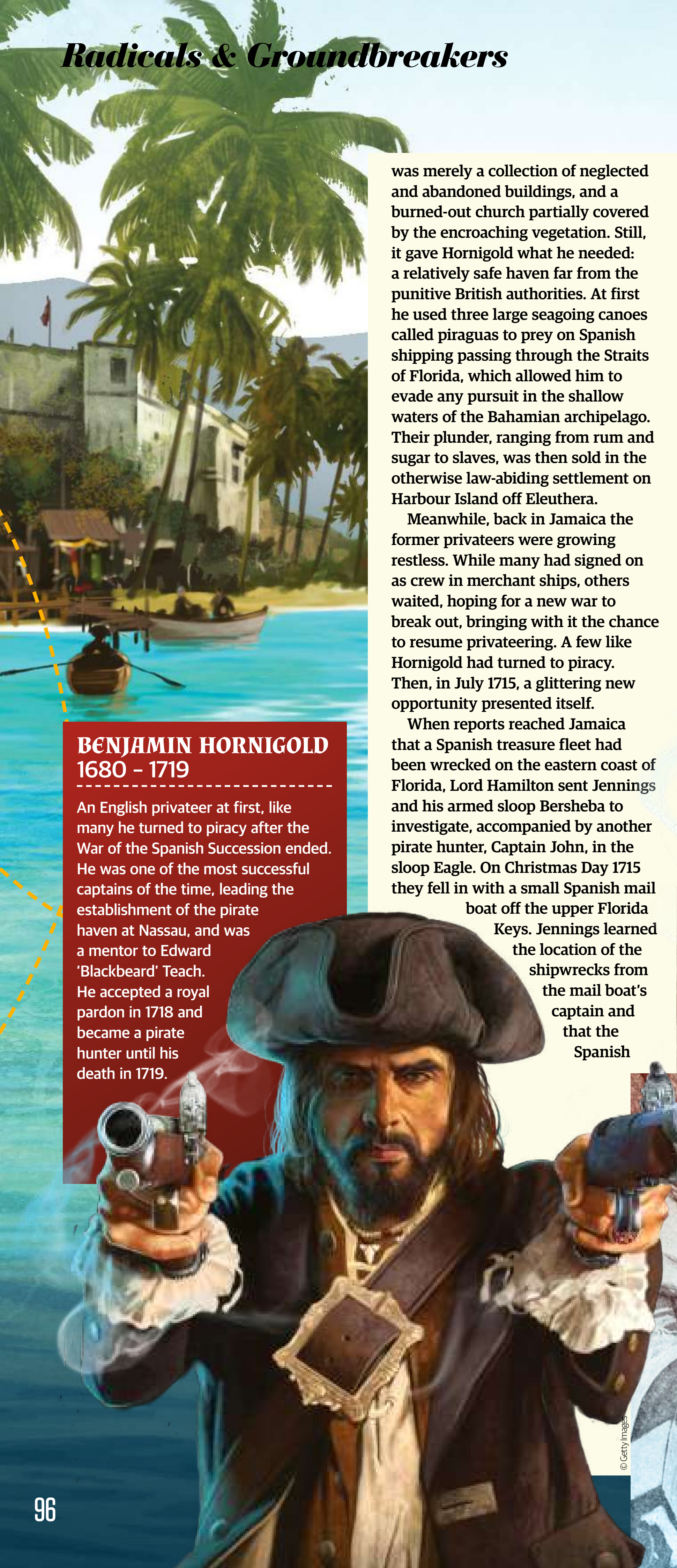
THE FIRST PIRATES OF NASSAU

The first pirates arrived in Nassau in the Bahamas during the latter half of 1713, the year of the peace deal. At their head was Benjamin Hornigold, a former privateering captain from Jamaica. He hadn’t let the cancellation of his Letter of Marque prevent him from continuing his attacks, though he was also scrupulous about only targeting the ships of his former enemies. As Port Royal was closed to him, Hornigold relocated to Nassau, accompanied by those who shared his casual attitude towards legal niceties.

What they found there was a dilapidated fort, its guns spiked by the Spanish and their carriages rotted. The settlement was little better and

TOP The most common form of pirate vessel of this period was the small single-masted sloop of the kind pictured here, c.1717

ABOVE Edward Teach, popularly known as ‘Blackbeard’, is arguably the most famous of the Nassau pirates thanks largely to his ferocious appearance



was merely a collection of neglected and abandoned buildings, and a burned-out church partially covered by the encroaching vegetation. Still, it gave Hornigold what he needed: a relatively safe haven far from the punitive British authorities. At first he used three large seagoing canoes called piraguas to prey on Spanish shipping passing through the Straits of Florida, which allowed him to evade any pursuit in the shallow waters of the Bahamian archipelago. Their plunder, ranging from rum and sugar to slaves, was then sold in the otherwise law-abiding settlement on Harbour Island off Eleuthera.

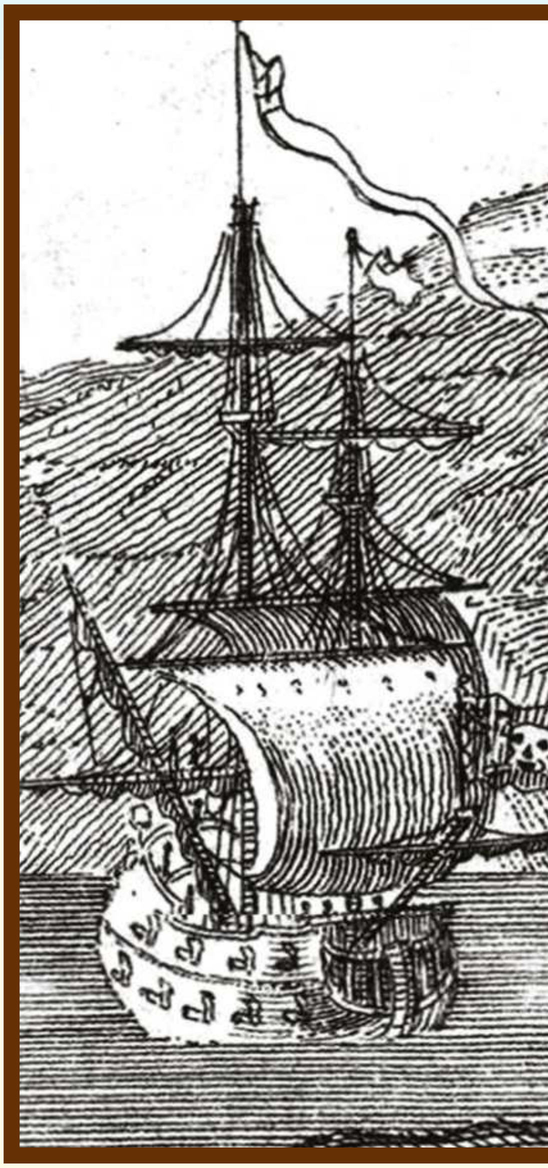
Meanwhile, back in Jamaica the former privateers were growing restless. While many had signed on as crew in merchant ships, others waited, hoping for a new war to break out, bringing with it the chance to resume privateering. A few like Hornigold had turned to piracy. Then, in July 1715, a glittering new opportunity presented itself.

When reports reached Jamaica that a Spanish treasure fleet had been wrecked on the eastern coast of Florida, Lord Hamilton sent Jennings and his armed sloop Bersheba to investigate, accompanied by another pirate hunter, Captain John, in the sloop Eagle. On Christmas Day 1715 they fell in with a small Spanish mail boat off the upper Florida Keys. Jennings learned the location of the shipwrecks from the mail boat's captain and that the Spanish

BENJAMIN HORNIGOLD
1680 – 1719

An English privateer at first, like many he turned to piracy after the War of the Spanish Succession ended. He was one of the most successful captains of the time, leading the establishment of the pirate haven at Nassau, and was a mentor to Edward 'Blackbeard' Teach. He accepted a royal pardon in 1718 and became a pirate hunter until his death in 1719.

© Getty Images



RIGHT The Queen Anne's Revenge was Blackbeard's flagship

BELOW The exploits of the pirates around Nassau have become the stuff of legend

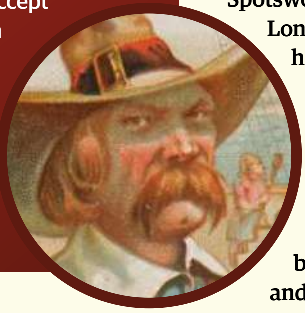
had established salvage camps close to them. It seemed much of the precious cargo had already been recovered and shipped back to Havana in Cuba, but there was still a lot in the camps. Jennings decided to exceed his orders and steal the treasure.

In a surprise night attack Jennings and his 150 men drove off the camps' guards and returned to their ships with their loot, valued at 60,000 pieces-of-eight. Back in Port Royal, Lord Hamilton initially turned a blind eye to Jennings' raid. However, the Spanish lodged a formal diplomatic complaint and Lord Hamilton was ordered to forbid further attacks. Jennings, though, ignored this and returned to Florida to sack the camps again, this time stealing 120,000 pieces-of-eight. But there would be no hero's welcome in Jamaica because he and his men had broken the law, so he made for New Providence in the Bahamas.

Jennings had briefly put in to Nassau the previous December and knew the island was now a pirate haven. Still, despite his pirate-hunting remit he had ignored Hornigold's activities. Now, in early 1716, he put in there again, his holds filled with plunder. By then Nassau was a very different place to the one Hornigold had first landed at three years before. A number of unscrupulous Jamaican merchants had moved there to trade with the pirates and now, thanks to the Spanish treasure, Nassau became a thriving den for pirates, treasure hunters, smugglers and illicit traders. By June 1716 Governor Alexander Spotswood of Virginia was writing to London complaining that pirates had taken over the Bahamas, his correspondence proof that Nassau had evolved into a true pirate haven.

CHARLES VANE
c.1680 – 1721

Vane learned his trade under Jennings and was part of the crew that stole the Spanish treasure in 1715. He got his own ship to captain by 1717 and, unlike many of the other senior pirates in Nassau, he did not accept the offer of a pardon in 1718. He was known to be a particularly cruel leader, showing little respect for his men or those he fought. He was captured and hanged in 1720.



"LIKE THE NOW-PARDONED JENNINGS BEFORE HIM, HORNIGOLD WOULD SERVE AS A PIRATE HUNTER"

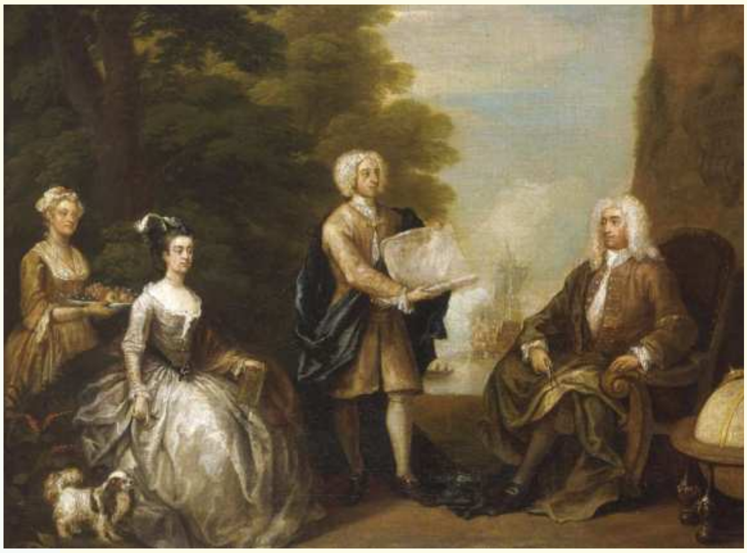
THE HEYDAY

There appears to have been bad blood between Hornigold and Jennings, and this led to the creation of two groups within the pirate community. The followers of Jennings included Charles Vane, a man who would later make a name for himself as one of the die-hard pirates who refused to accept a royal pardon. Those who sailed with Hornigold included Sam Bellamy and Paulsgrave Williams, and the French pirate Olivier Levasseur (nicknamed La Busse, or 'Buzzard'). During 1716 these groups sometimes cooperated with each other, and sometimes preyed on each other. This duplicity was seen when Jennings captured the French armed merchantman St Marie off Cuba in April 1716. He took her with the help of Bellamy and Williams, but a few days later the two pirates absconded with much of Jennings' plunder and rejoined their mentor Hornigold.

Much of what we know of piratical activity during this period comes

ABOVE Treasure from the 1715 fleet – a mixture of Spanish gold doubloons and silver pieces-of-eight found near Fort Pierce, Florida

BELOW Bahamas governor Woodes Rogers (seated right) with his family



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from depositions written by merchant captains whose vessels had been attacked. Essentially, these were akin to crime reports presented to the authorities. One, penned in Jamaica in mid-December 1716, provided the first mention a new pirate captain. It claimed that a week before, Captain Henry Timberlake of the brigantine Lamb had been plundered by pirates in the Windward Passage, between Cuba and Hispaniola (now Haiti). His assailant was Hornigold, commanding the sloop Delight. Then, an hour later, another pirate sloop appeared. The Lamb was boarded again, and this time the pirates took the ship's provisions. Their captain, according to Timberlake, was Edward Thach. The spelling of the pirate varied slightly - Thach, Thatch and Teach being the most common. History though, would know him as Blackbeard.

This meant that by late 1716 Edward Teach, or Blackbeard, was operating alongside Hornigold. Then in the early summer of 1717 a British privateer was wrecked on Cat Island, 190km to the south-east of New Providence. After her commander, Captain Mathew Musson, made it back to Jamaica that July he wrote a letter to the British Council of Trade and Plantations. He reported that, according to the island's inhabitants, "five pirates made the harbour of New Providence their rendezvous". He listed them as Hornigold, Jennings, Burgiss, White and Thatch, the latter commanding a six-gun sloop crewed by 60 men.

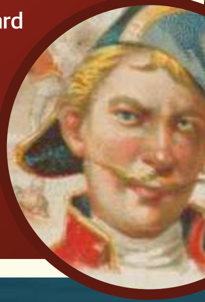
THE DECLINE

By then though, Blackbeard had flown the coop. In May 1717 he and Hornigold went on a cruise together, ranging as far afield as the Carolinas before returning to Nassau in August. After that, the two men went their separate ways and Blackbeard would begin a pirate cruise that lasted until November 1718, when he was killed off Ocracoke Island in Carolina's Outer Banks. Other pirates based on Nassau moved on too. In early 1717 La Busse left the Bahamas in his sloop Postillion to hunt off the Brazilian coast, while Bellamy in the Sultana and Williams in the sloop Marianne sailed off on their own joint cruise.

It was Bellamy who had the greatest success, capturing the large slave ship Whydah Galley in the Windward Passage. He and Williams then cruised up America's Atlantic seaboard. This venture ended abruptly in mid-April when the Whydah was caught in a hurricane off Cape Cod. She was wrecked and Bellamy and almost all his crew were lost. The

STEDE BONNET
1688 – 1718

While some pirates became plantation owners after their careers on the high seas, Bonnet started that way and was known as the 'Gentleman Pirate'. He was wealthy enough to buy his own ship and hire a crew of 70. He fell in with Blackbeard and gave up control of his ship to the more experienced seaman. Bonnet took the pardon in 1718 but went back to piracy soon after.



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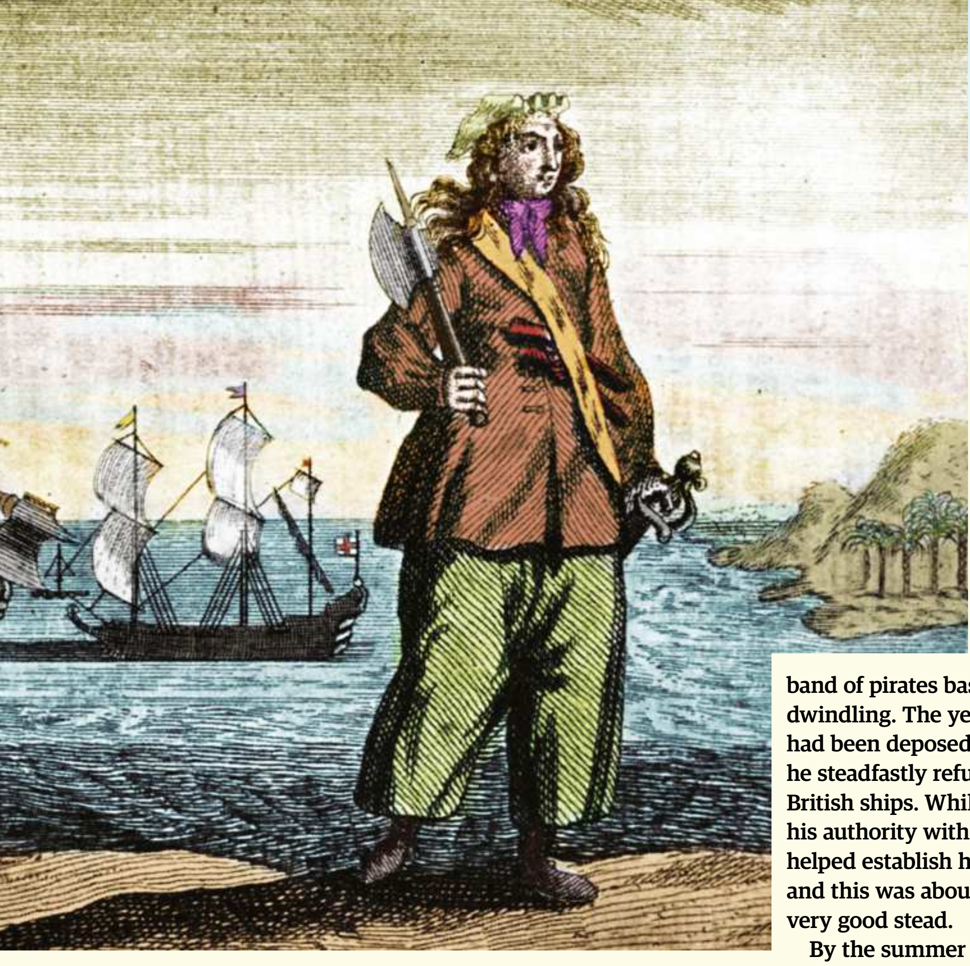


‘CALICO’ JACK RACKHAM
1682 – 1720

Calico Jack was not the most successful or swashbuckling pirate, but he’s famous thanks to a few unusual events in his life on the high seas. He overthrew Charles Vane’s command of The Ranger and also had both Mary Read and Anne Bonny on his crew, entering into a romantic relationship with the later. He was captured by an English privateer in 1720 and hanged.

ABOVE Calico Jack’s association with Anne Bonny and Mary Read made him famous through history, despite not being a particularly successful pirate

LEFT After years of violent plunder, by 1720 the pirate scourge had largely been dealt with

FAR-LEFT Pirates who refused or broke their pardons like Stede Bonnet were hunted down and executed

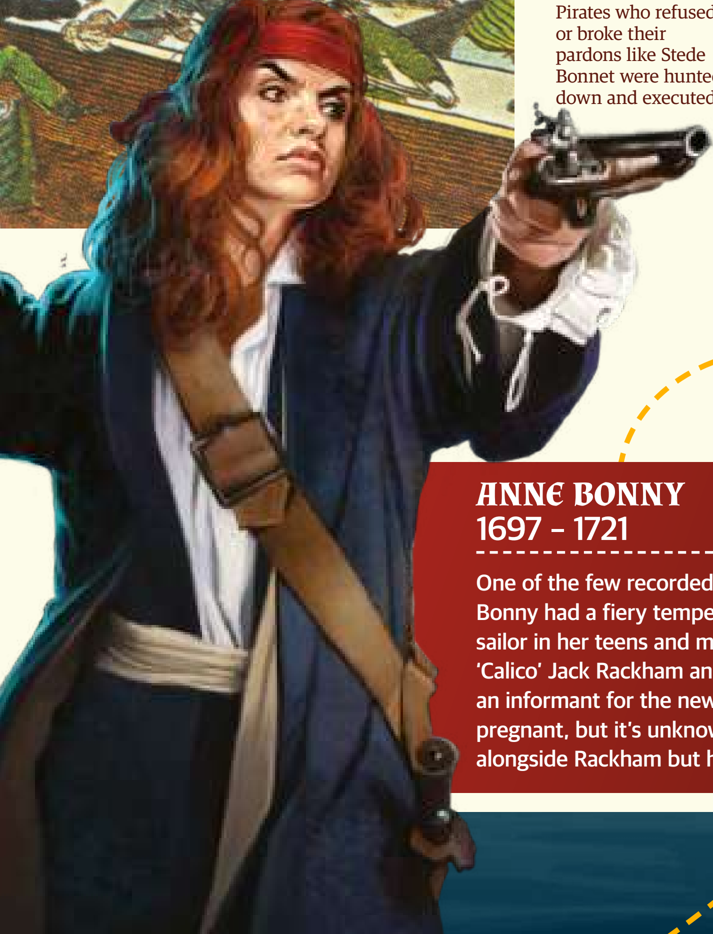
band of pirates based in Nassau was dwindling. The year before, Hornigold had been deposed by his crew when he steadfastly refused to attack British ships. While this undermined his authority with his men it also helped establish him as a moderate, and this was about to stand him in very good stead.

By the summer of 1717 the British authorities had been pondering how best to react to the pirate scourge. The coming of peace four years before had led to a scaling down of the Royal Navy and it lacked the resources it needed to hunt down the pirates, so the Council of Trade and Plantations came up with a pragmatic solution. A pardon would be offered to any pirate willing to accept it, on the grounds that they ceased any attacks by January 1718. On 5 September 1717 the Proclamation for Suppressing of Pirates was signed by King George I and passed into law. Word of the pardon reached Nassau that December, and Hornigold decided to accept it. The pirate community was split, though, and while Hornigold and Jennings both campaigned for acceptance, others adamantly refused to countenance any surrender.

Matters came to a head in February when the frigate HMS Phoenix arrived off Nassau. Her commander, Captain Pearce, brought provisional pardons and with Hornigold’s help he gathered 209 signatures. Before Pearce left, he intimated that a British governor, Woodes Rogers, would arrive that summer to confirm the surrender and to formally reclaim the Bahamas in the name of the crown. This led to an irrevocable split among the Nassau pirates as the die-hards led by Vane refused to accept British rule. Inevitably the situation reached a climax when Rogers finally appeared in late July 1718. Vane spectacularly rushed past the governor’s squadron using a fireship to force a passage through the British ships, but this would turn out to be the last real hurrah of pirate Nassau.

Vane’s dramatic escape was calculated to humiliate Rogers, but in fact it solved a problem by removing those who opposed British rule. Rogers took command of the colony, occupied its fort and raised the British flag. With the help of Hornigold he finally brought an end to the once-feared pirate community of Nassau. Like the now-pardoned Jennings before him, Hornigold would serve as a pirate hunter, until he was lost in a hurricane late the following year.

Offering pardons to the pirates had been a real success – the ‘carrot’ in Britain’s anti-piracy initiative. The ‘stick’ was that those pirates who remained at large would now be hunted down and made examples of. The Royal Navy could now concentrate on the search for them and by the early 1720s the pirate scourge had largely been dealt with. When some of the pirates on Nassau returned to their old ways, Rogers and others brought them to justice. After a series of high-profile trials and executions, the message was clear: piracy didn’t pay. The death of Blackbeard in November 1718 and the subsequent trial and execution ▶

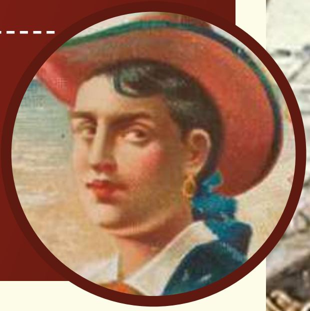


ANNE BONNY
1697 – 1721

One of the few recorded women who sailed as a pirate in this era, Bonny had a fiery temper that matched her red hair. She married a sailor in her teens and moved to Nassau around 1718. Here she met ‘Calico’ Jack Rackham and joined his crew, while her husband became an informant for the new governor of the Bahamas. Bonny became pregnant, but it’s unknown what happened to the child. She was tried alongside Rackham but her fate remains unknown.

MARY READ
1685 – 1721

Read was raised as a boy by her mother, seemingly pretending to be her deceased older half-brother Mark as a means to keep money coming from his grandmother. She continued to dress as a man when she joined the army. She married a Flemish soldier around 1700 but he died not long after. Read took a ship to the Caribbean and joined a pirate crew, teaming up with Calico Jack, but was later caught and executed.



of his crew in Williamsburg in the Virginia colony was just one example of this new draconian approach to piracy. For a few brief years piracy had flourished in Nassau, and a nascent pirate community had been established, but the speed with which this settlement collapsed proved just how unstable it had always been.

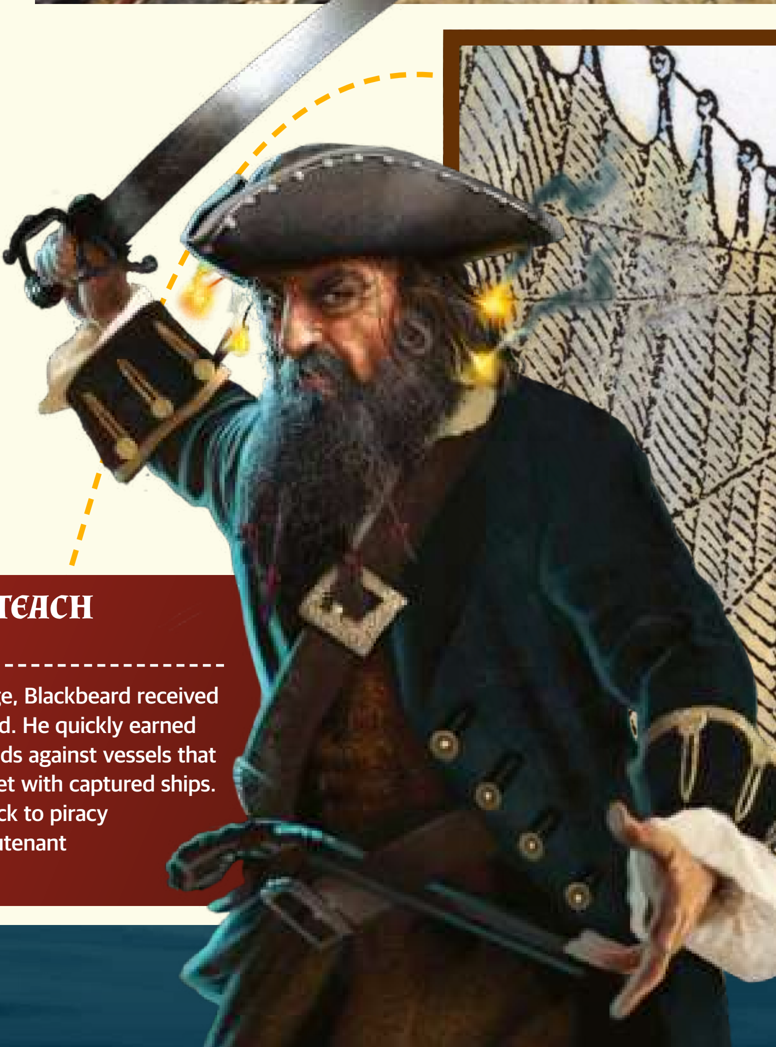
> “BY ALL ACCOUNTS PIRATE NASSAU WAS AN ANARCHIC PLACE, WITH ITS OWN WAY OF DOING THINGS”

THE PIRATE COMMUNITY

In later years the establishment of this pirate community at Nassau came to be seen as something much grander than it was. A number of historians argued that it was a social experiment, a brief egalitarian flourishing of democracy in a world dominated by the restrictive mores of civilisation and society. Much has been made of pirates rejecting these values and the paternal authority of nations. There is certainly something to this: the low-key radicalism of these pirates was noted by those who came into contact with them or was recorded in their last words before being executed. Nassau, though, was never established as anything other than a temporary haven for those living outside the law. Claims of Nassau being a ‘Pirate Republic’ are misleading because it suggests a degree of unity and self-determination that simply didn’t exist.

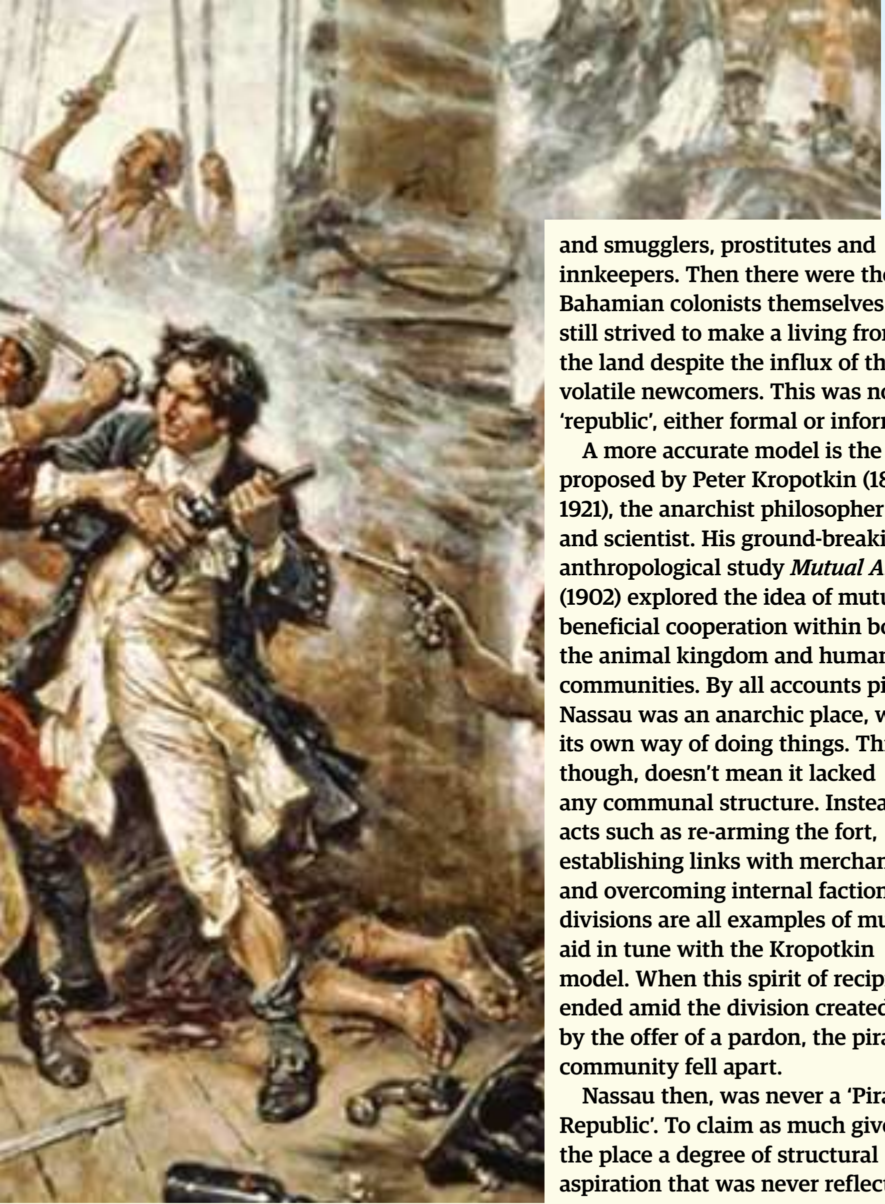
In his book *The Republic of Pirates* (2007), author Colin Woodard proposes that this ‘republic’ was a semi-organised confederacy of pirates who worked together to build a community. He argues that the governance of Nassau was dominated by a pirate code, and that the democratic structure that existed within the pirate community ensured that the ‘republic’ would be run on fair and just lines. However, this theory takes the known egalitarianism that existed among pirate crews and projects it onto a much bigger canvas: the governance not of a ship but of a whole pirate community. Certainly there are examples where the pirates worked together for the good of their community – the re-arming of Nassau’s fort in late 1716 using guns taken from captured ships is a case in point. However, this falls short of proving that a ‘Pirate Republic’ existed - a structure that was never mentioned by contemporaries such as Rogers.

In fact, the nature of the pirate community of Nassau was much simpler and it is clear that it never operated as a single political entity. Instead, factions existed between the followers of Jennings and Hornigold, and later those of Hornigold and Vane. Nassau itself was divided between the pirates and those who supported them; the illegal merchants



EDWARD ‘BLACKBEARD’ TEACH
c.1680 – 1718

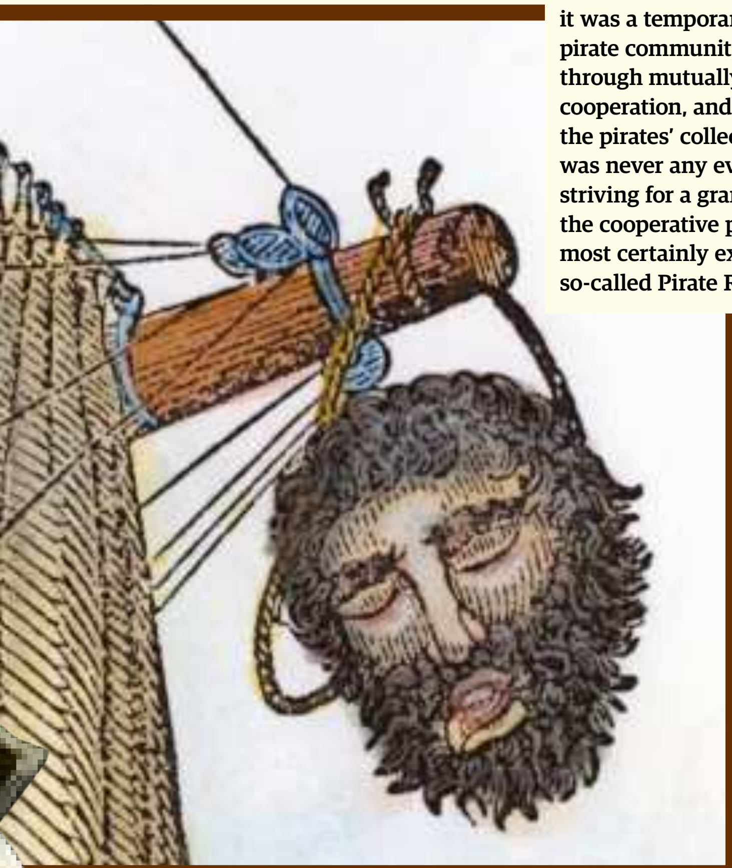
Possibly the best-known pirate of this age, Blackbeard received his first command in 1716, from Hornigold. He quickly earned a fearsome reputation with his daring raids against vessels that crossed his path, building up his own fleet with captured ships. He accepted a pardon but soon went back to piracy and was eventually hunted down by Lieutenant Robert Maynard and killed in 1718.



and smugglers, prostitutes and innkeepers. Then there were the Bahamian colonists themselves, who still strived to make a living from the land despite the influx of these volatile newcomers. This was no 'republic', either formal or informal.

A more accurate model is the one proposed by Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921), the anarchist philosopher and scientist. His ground-breaking anthropological study *Mutual Aid* (1902) explored the idea of mutually beneficial cooperation within both the animal kingdom and human communities. By all accounts pirate Nassau was an anarchic place, with its own way of doing things. This, though, doesn't mean it lacked any communal structure. Instead, acts such as re-arming the fort, establishing links with merchants and overcoming internal factional divisions are all examples of mutual aid in tune with the Kropotkin model. When this spirit of reciprocity ended amid the division created by the offer of a pardon, the pirate community fell apart.

Nassau then, was never a 'Pirate Republic'. To claim as much gives the place a degree of structural aspiration that was never reflected in the historical records. Instead, it was a temporary and transient pirate community that developed through mutually beneficial cooperation, and one which served the pirates' collective need. There was never any evidence of any striving for a grander motive. Nassau the cooperative pirate community most certainly existed – Nassau the so-called Pirate Republic never did.



ABOVE-LEFT Blackbeard couldn't walk away from the pirate life and was hunted down by British authorities and privateers

LEFT Blackbeard was beheaded and his head displayed on the front of Lieutenant Robert Maynard's sloop

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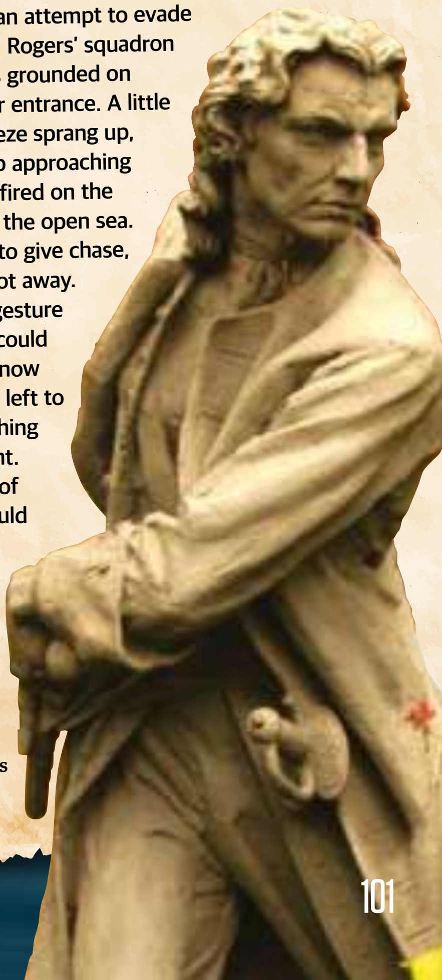
PIRATES' LAST STAND

The dramatic end to the haven in the Bahamas

In the late afternoon of 24 July 1718, Governor Woodes Rogers appeared off Nassau Harbour with a small squadron: his own ship Delicia, a storeship, two naval frigates and two smaller sloops. He dropped anchor, as it was too late in the day to claim possession of the settlement. That evening all ashore seemed calm, and the sailors settled down for what they assumed would be a peaceful night. In fact, Charles Vane, the leader of Nassau's die-hard pirates, had no intention of meekly submitting to the British crown. Shortly after 2am lookouts spotted sails being hoisted on a large ship in the harbour. Then, flames were seen on her decks. She was a fireship, and Vane had set her on a collision course with the British squadron.

In a frenzy, orders were given to cut the ships' anchor cables and hoist sails in an attempt to evade the approaching inferno. Rogers' squadron scattered, and two ships grounded on sandbars off the harbour entrance. A little later, as an offshore breeze sprang up, Rogers saw a small sloop approaching them. As it passed by it fired on the Delicia, then headed for the open sea. Rogers ordered a sloop to give chase, but Vane and his men got away. It was as spectacular a gesture as any of the die-hards could have wished for. Still, it now meant that nobody was left to prevent Rogers establishing control of the settlement.

This marked the end of pirate Nassau. Vane would remain at large for less than a year and after his capture he was tried and hanged in Port Royal as an example to other would-be pirates.



RIGHT A statue of Woodes Rogers stands outside the British Colonial Hilton hotel in Nassau

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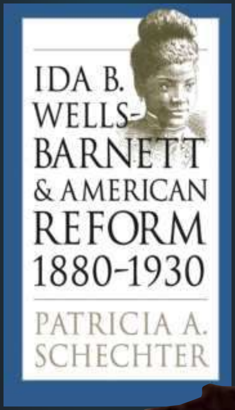
EXPERT BIO

PROFESSOR PATRICIA A SCHECHTER

Professor Schechter works at Portland State University and is an expert in women's, public and transnational history. She is also the author of *Ida B Wells-Barnett & American Reform, 1880-1930* (University of North Carolina Press, 2001).



IDA B.
WELLS-
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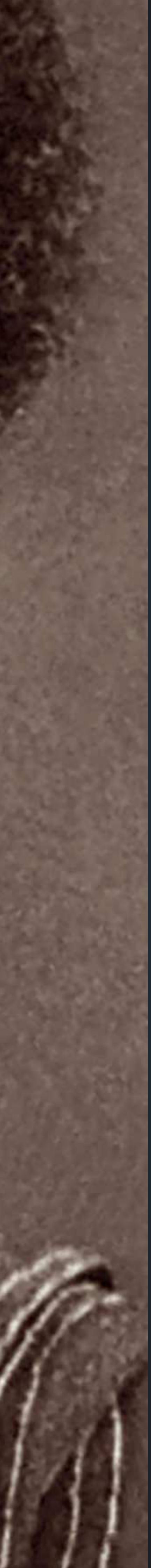
& AMERICAN
REFORM
1880-1930
PATRICIA A.
SCHECHTER



IDA B WELLS

American Heroine

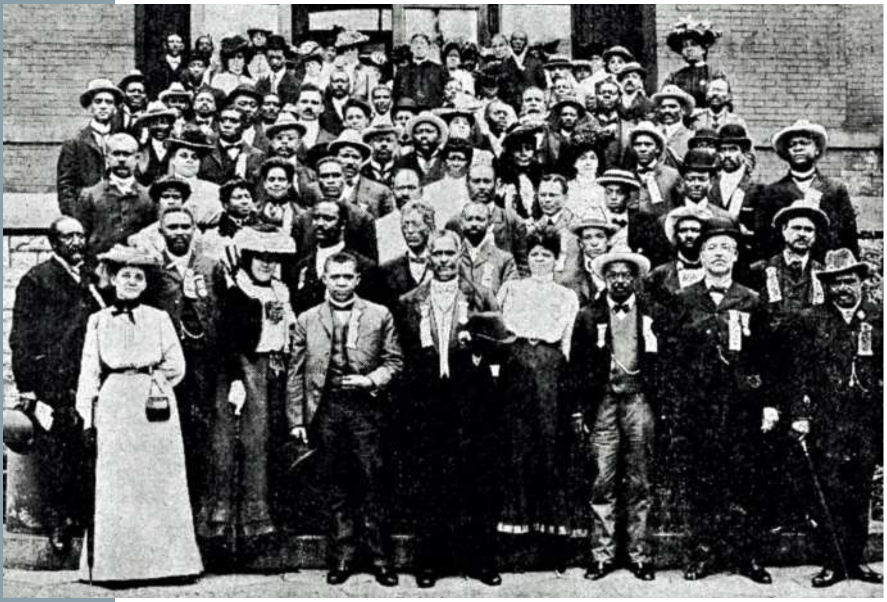
The journalist, activist and advocate shone a light on racism and the scourge of lynching in America

Written by Patricia A Schechter

In 2022, Ida B Wells is becoming visible in the United States. She was posthumously awarded the Pulitzer Prize for journalism in 2020, and a major boulevard now carries her name in Chicago, her long-time home. The family residence is a landmark there and *The Light of Truth* monument has been installed in her honour. Academic studies have spawned a growing shelf of children's and young adult books about her, and an Ida B Wells doll just dropped as part of Mattel's Inspiring Women series. Many of these recognitions are the result of the advocacy of Wells' great-granddaughter, Michelle Duster. The Black Lives Matter movement provides context for the recovery of lost voices for racial justice in the United States – but why so late? And what is the fuller story of this previously neglected and now celebrated figure?

After the Plessy v Ferguson Supreme Court decision of 1896, 'separate but equal' became law in the United States. African Americans who faced segregation in employment, education, housing and public accommodations now lacked recourse, yet white people crossed the colour line without consequences. These conditions were normalised in the dominant society by negative, animalistic stereotypes about African Americans that circulated through a wide variety of media: newspapers, photography and, eventually, movies. The everyday enforcement of racist 'Jim Crow' laws was frequently carried out through extralegal violence, including torture and murder.

Wells intervened in this situation by examining newspaper reports in the mainstream 'white' press about racial violence, especially lynching. Lynching



ABOVE A photo of the Afro-American Council, among them Ida B Wells and Booker T Washington

LEFT A family portrait of Wells with four of her six children. Pictured here are Charles, Herman, Ida and Alfreda in 1909

BELOW The New York office of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, of which Wells was a member

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referred to mob murders that spiked in the 1890s and made headlines. Lynch mobs operated at night, were often masked, and their actions were typically passed off by sheriffs and the police as committed by 'parties unknown'. In a series of news articles, pamphlets and speeches, Wells documented and exposed the violent sociology of anti-Black racism in the era of segregation. She daringly argued that sexual politics held this racist system together, and found that African American men who challenged the colour line were falsely charged with the rape of white women. At the same time, white men's assaults on Black women were not considered crimes and went unpunished. Wells tallied these horrible news stories and made some startling findings: only about 30 percent of reported lynchings involved even the charge of rape, and many African American men were put to death for disturbing the colour line. Anything from jostling a white person on the sidewalk to changing jobs without their white employer's consent was an excuse to punish or even kill a Black person. The rape charges reported in the newspapers were just a ploy used to whip up the mob and justify beatings and murder.

Wells' second discovery was equally damning: the accusation of rape was applied to cover up and punish situations of consensual sex between white women and Black men. Lurid accusations that Black men were natural rapists who could only be controlled by violence and death threats silenced discussion. Interracial marriage was illegal in the South, so sexual contact across the colour line was automatically stigmatised and illicit. In this scenario, Black women's victimisation was erased and fear of the supposedly threatening Black male became a focal point for white supremacists.

> "Wells documented and exposed the violent sociology of anti-Black racism in the era of segregation"

In May 1892 Wells first published her findings in a newspaper she edited in Memphis, Tennessee, called the *Free Speech and Headlight*. Its press office was attacked and destroyed by local whites and her life was threatened. Fleeing to the north, Wells published her research in a pamphlet called *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases*. As debate over tactics to combat lynching unfolded, Wells' insights and facts were appropriated and circulated by others, while she was left behind. However, for a few years, 1892-95, she was the most famous Black woman in the English-speaking world. To this day no scholar, journalist or activist has improved upon her data or her analysis of white supremacy as it functioned in her lifetime. So how did a girl born in slavery come to shape a critical inflection point in the history of civil rights activism? Fortunately, she left an autobiography and a diary that help to fill in the story.

Ida Belle Wells was born in the small town of Holly Springs, Mississippi, to parents Jim and Lizzie Wells, just at the US Civil War got underway. As the oldest of six children, she was the responsible big sister in the family. Her parents valued family life, Christian faith and education. Wells recalled her mother's pride in sending her children to school and her own satisfaction in learning to read the Bible as an adult. Her father was equally attentive to new possibilities after the war. During the years of Reconstruction, US society briefly opened up rights and opportunities for African Americans. Wells read the newspapers aloud to her father and his friends at their home, which impressed upon her the importance of literacy, current events and using one's voice. Sadly, the optimism of Wells' family life was cut short when a yellow fever epidemic swept through the Mississippi

3x © Getty Images

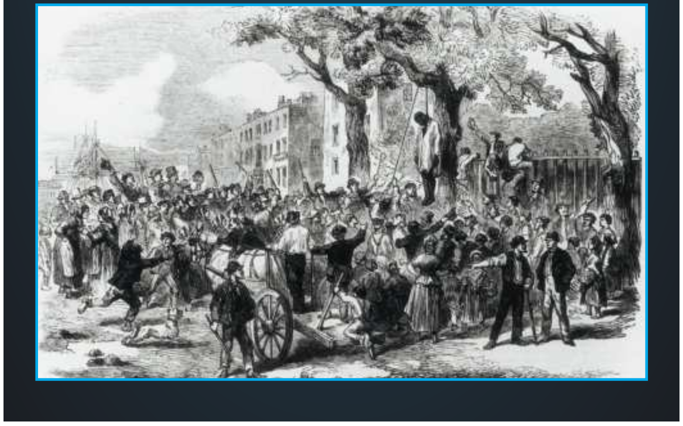
WHAT IS LYNCHING?

A brief history of vigilante 'justice' used to terrorise Black Americans

Lynching is a term commonly associated with racism against Black Americans, but what did it actually entail? A lynching is when a violent mob apprehends and executes an individual under the pretext of some kind of extrajudicial justice. Such events often involved physical abuse, torture and public humiliation before the murder of the victim. Examples of such activities span the globe throughout history.

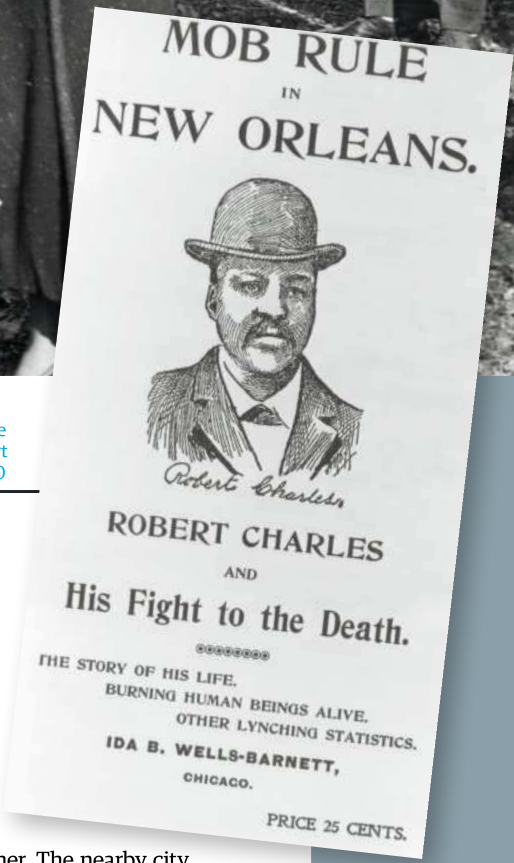
While people of any race or background could be the victim of lynching, in America they are most commonly associated with white mobs attacking Black Americans. The statistics bear this out, with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) stating that between 1882 and 1968 4,743 recorded lynchings took place, of which 3,446 (about 72 percent) targeted Black victims.

Lynchings were used as cover to victimise and terrorise Black Americans: it was claimed the victim had committed a crime or social trespass of some description, which in turn became the pretext for attacking the individual and murdering them. The most well-known image of such a lynching involved the victim being hung from a tree, but it could also involve mutilation, decapitation or being burned alive. There are even examples of photos from lynchings being sold as souvenirs.



ABOVE Protesters in Washington DC demonstrate against racist violence

RIGHT An ad for Wells' book on the lynching of Robert Charles from 1900



MOB RULE
IN
NEW ORLEANS.

Robert Charles

ROBERT CHARLES
AND
His Fight to the Death.

THE STORY OF HIS LIFE.
BURNING HUMAN BEINGS ALIVE.
OTHER LYNCHING STATISTICS.

IDA B. WELLS-BARNETT,
CHICAGO.

PRICE 25 CENTS.

Valley in 1878. Jim and Lizzie Wells both died, leaving their children orphans.

Friends and kin stepped forward to care for the Wells children but young Ida, aged 16, insisted that she would get a job and earn money to keep the siblings together. Yet the task was too big, and a crippled sister had to be sent to a relative's home for care. But encouraged by the spirit of 'each one teach one' in the African American community, Wells resolved to get a teaching job and keep her family together. The nearby city of Memphis offered employment opportunities and in around 1880 she moved there.

Memphis was a thriving city with a dynamic African American population. It was the birthplace of the blues, home to the musical composer WC Handy and, much later, Elvis Presley. Before 1900, Memphis boasted the first African American millionaire, Robert Church, who made his money in real estate. In addition to teaching, Wells immersed herself in numerous clubs, literary societies, theatre groups and church life. Her diary noted how she and her peers used their voices in new ways. They wrote poetry and fiction, performed Shakespeare, debated social issues, and circulated their ideas through the newspapers and church publications that flourished at that time. With Wells scripting the plan in the pages of the *Memphis Free Speech* newspaper,

Image source: wiki/Library of Congress

the Memphis Black community launched a successful boycott of the racially segregated street cars. Wells also brought a personal lawsuit against the Memphis C&O Railroad when a white train conductor forcibly removed her from the 'Ladies' car even though she had purchased a valid ticket. Wells won and wrote about her case, but the decision was reversed by the state supreme court in 1887. This reversal signalled a rising backlash against Black equality. In Memphis, this backlash peaked in early 1892 when three African American shopkeepers were lynched for offering competition to a nearby white grocer. Wells was godmother to the daughter of one of the victims and this event further increased her determination to mobilise against racist violence. Her exposé article in the *Memphis Free Speech* about this lynching was a watershed moment in her life: boldly speaking out meant leaving behind Memphis and her friends and family in the South forever.

Wells' reputation in journalism cushioned her landing in the north. She was welcomed by New Yorkers and began writing for the *New York Age* newspaper. African Americans in Brooklyn, Boston and Philadelphia were well organised through churches, voluntary associations and clubs, and Black women especially welcomed Wells as a refugee from the 'land of lynching' in the South and offered her speaking opportunities and funds. With this support, Wells launched a major educational campaign through the press. Two events helped give her an international audience. The first was the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago of 1893, which drew people and attention from all over

THE WOMEN'S CLUB MOVEMENT

As the United States remained fragmented, women came together

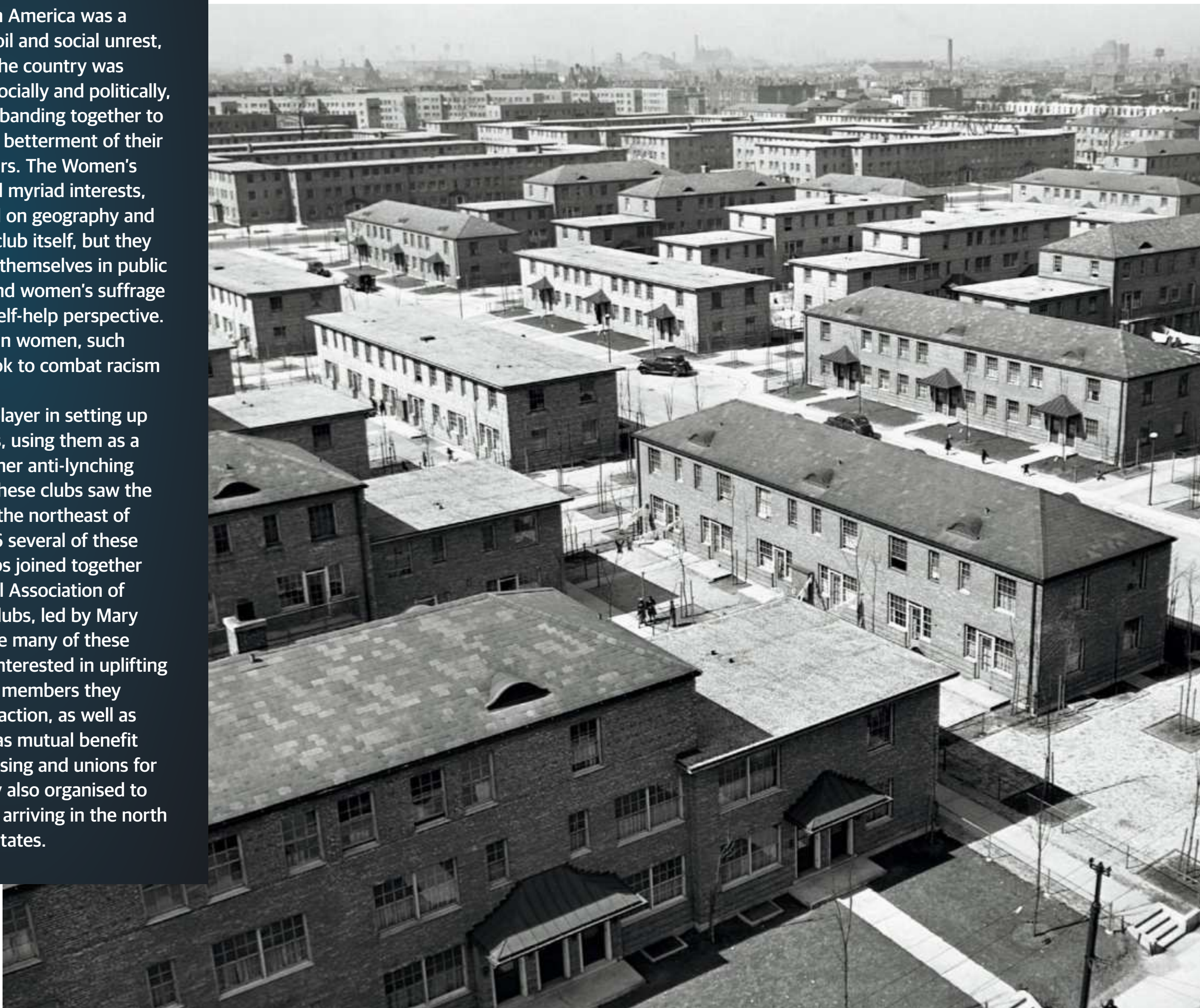
Post-Reconstruction America was a place of great turmoil and social unrest, but while much of the country was pulling itself apart socially and politically, many women were banding together to form groups for the betterment of their peers and neighbours. The Women's Club movement had myriad interests, often varying based on geography and the makeup of the club itself, but they typically interested themselves in public health, education and women's suffrage with a ground-up, self-help perspective. For African-American women, such clubs would also look to combat racism and inequality.

Wells was a key player in setting up some of these clubs, using them as a platform to spread her anti-lynching message. Many of these clubs saw the greatest success in the northeast of the country. In 1896 several of these Black Women's Clubs joined together to form the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, led by Mary Church Terrell. While many of these clubs were mostly interested in uplifting and educating their members they also inspired direct action, as well as organisations such as mutual benefit societies, social housing and unions for Black workers. They also organised to settle Black women arriving in the north from the southern states.

BELOW The Ida B Wells housing project in Chicago, Illinois, photographed in 1942

BELOW-RIGHT The Wells Homes, seen here in 1973, were demolished between 2002 and 2011

BOTTOM-RIGHT This monument was dedicated to Wells in 2021 and stands on the location of a public housing complex she set up in Chicago



the world. Working with US minister to Haiti, Frederick Douglass, Wells put together a pamphlet protesting Black exclusion from the fair, and the introduction of the pamphlet was translated into French and German. The second global event was the cresting of Anglo-American imperialism and the critiques of empire that began to emerge in the 1890s. Not only did indigenous people resist domination, but sympathetic whites also began to raise questions about the racism that accompanied colonialism. Some of these critics had been active in the international campaigns against slavery or were the children and grandchildren of anti-slavery activists. Most were connected to Protestant denominations that had been involved with antislavery or that were part of missionary efforts that accompanied European colonial ventures in Africa and Asia.

England had a strong antislavery heritage vested in the churches – in the 1840s and 1850s British antislavery activists had brought speakers from the US like William Lloyd Garrison and Douglass to give lectures. Former antislavery activists connected Wells to British women who were interested in educating audiences about racism by drawing their attention to lynching. Lynching in the United States would take the lives of nearly 4,000 African Americans in the decades around the turn of the 20th century, and newspapers and magazines on both sides of the Atlantic carried photographs, etchings and reports about white mobs who burned and mutilated Black bodies, creating a disturbing record that demanded redress. With the endorsement of antislavery veterans like Douglass and William Still, Wells made two speaking tours in England, one in 1892 and the other in 1894. She also wrote more pamphlets, including *United States Atrocities: Lynch Law*, which was published in London in 1894. Almost half of her autobiography is devoted to documenting her remarkable overseas speaking tours. Travelling by boat and by train, Wells spoke in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Bristol, Newcastle, and Liverpool, as well as Edinburgh and Aberdeen. International press coverage of her speeches and activities abroad made Wells one of the best known and most controversial figures of her day.

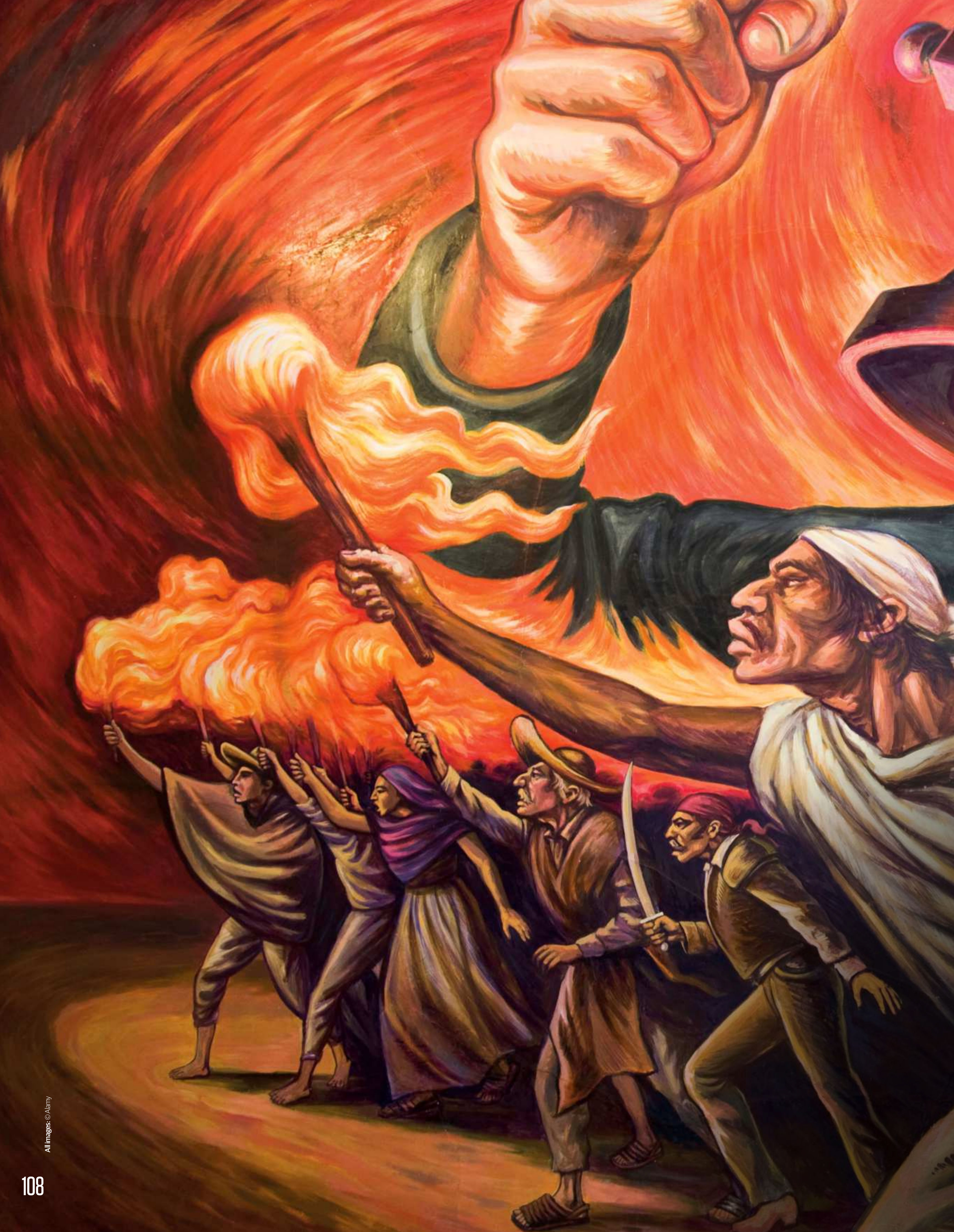
> "Some called Wells' truth-telling heroic, others worried that it could and did provoke violent retaliation"

Controversy met her at every turn. Wells spoke and wrote about ugly and indelicate matters that were thought to be inappropriate topics for ladies. She challenged male privilege and excess, both political and sexual. She insisted that Black women and men were victims of abuse and deserved justice, and she unequivocally identified white supremacy as a fundamental threat to Christian civilisation. Some called her truth-telling heroic, others worried that it could and did provoke violent retaliation. Even some people in the African American community urged her to moderation. Wells also faced resistance from powerful white women, like Frances Willard, leader of the World Woman's Christian Temperance Union, and from Susan B Anthony, the famous suffragist. Willard tried to appease Southern white women in her temperance organisation by refraining from condemning lynching. Wells married in 1895 and began a family of her own but Anthony opined that being a wife and mother compromised a woman's ability to be a leader.

This push-back took some of the steam out of the anti-lynching campaign, even as lynching continued almost unabated. Despair could be heard in some quarters. Voices of accommodation gathered around the Alabama educator Booker T Washington and, later, his popular National Negro Business League. When New Yorkers mobilised to establish the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909, the now Mrs Ida B Wells-Barnett was present but not welcomed. Leadership fell to WEB DuBois and Mary Church Terrell, daughter of Robert Church of Memphis. Both of these figures held prestigious graduate degrees and had access to elite social circles and philanthropic pockets that Wells-Barnett could not match.

Her marriage to Chicago lawyer Ferdinand L Barnett in 1895 rooted Ida in that city for the rest of her life. Barnett was an activist and a newspaper man, and the couple published the *Chicago Conservator* for a few years together. In addition to raising four children, Wells-Barnett remained politically active, especially since women citizens could vote after 1920. Through the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the networks of Black women's clubs, Wells-Barnett pressed for school and prison reform and, of course, for anti-lynching legislation, which passed in Illinois in 1905. She continued with her investigative journalism and published her findings about race riots in East S Louis, Illinois, and Elaine, Arkansas, as pamphlets during World War I. In Chicago, Wells-Barnett established a social service bureau called the Negro Fellowship League, organised the Alpha Suffrage Club for Black women voters, and ran for elective office herself in 1930. Though unsuccessful in that campaign, Ida B Wells-Barnett was a catalyst for racial justice and a pillar of her family and community until her death the next year, at the age of 68.

3x © Getty Images



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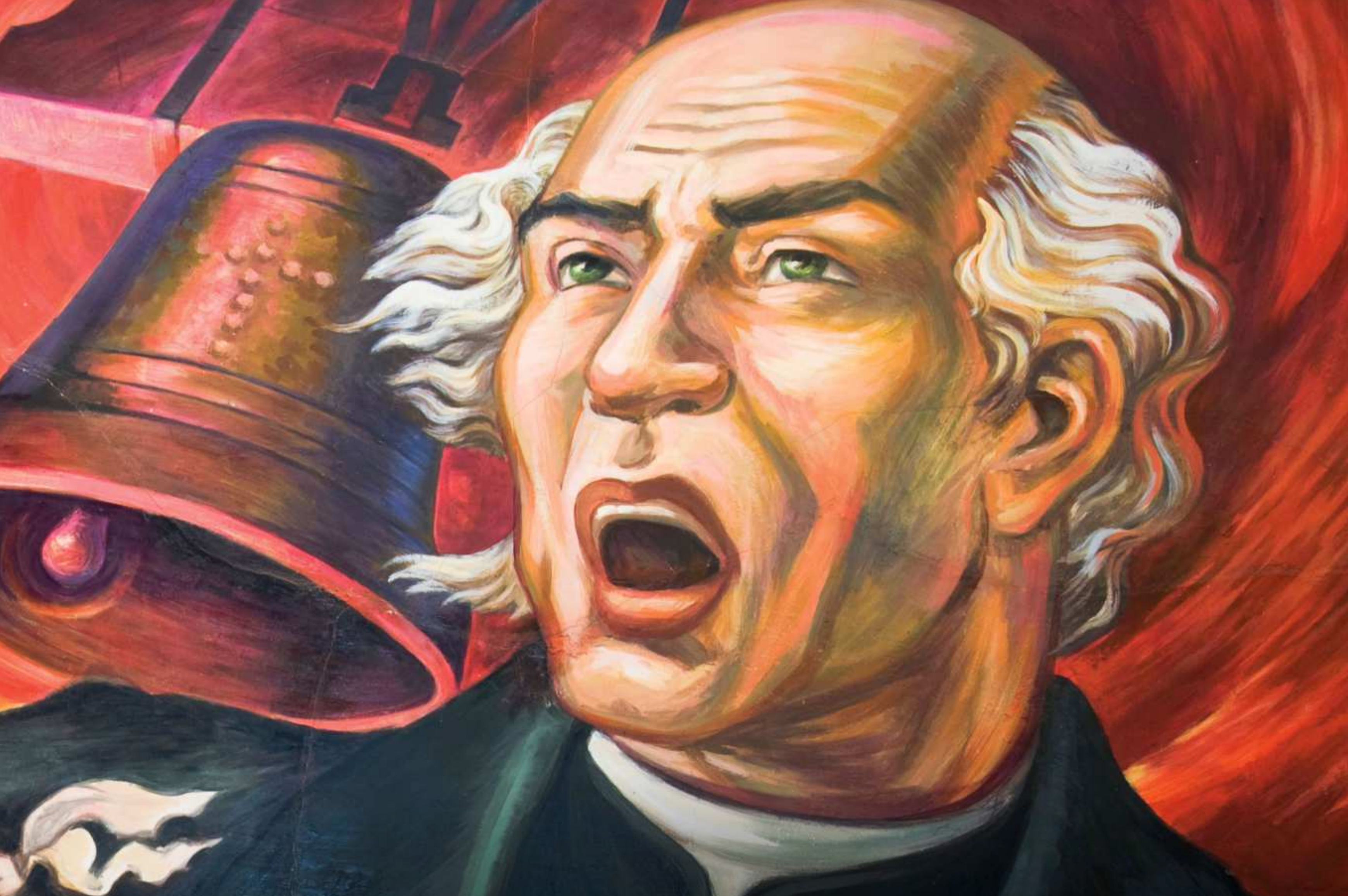


THE WARRIOR PRIEST WHO UNITED MEXICO

How Miguel Hidalgo became known as the father of a nation and Mexico's George Washington

Written by Eric Van Young

Guanajuato is a charming, idyllic Mexican city with a population of about 200,000, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1988. It derives its deeply romantic atmosphere from its many Spanish colonial homes and 19th-century buildings, steep cobble-stoned streets and crystalline mountain air. Then there's spots like the Callejón del Beso (the Alley of the Kiss), an alleyway so narrow that local legend abounds with stories of star-crossed lovers embracing from balconies on either side. The underground river running through the city's dramatic tunnels flows downstream to the old silver mines and refineries located between Guanajuato and the fabled artists' colony of San Miguel de Allende. The numerous silver deposits were discovered in the 16th century, producing vast fortunes and much of the silver that fuelled the commerce of the international economy. ▶

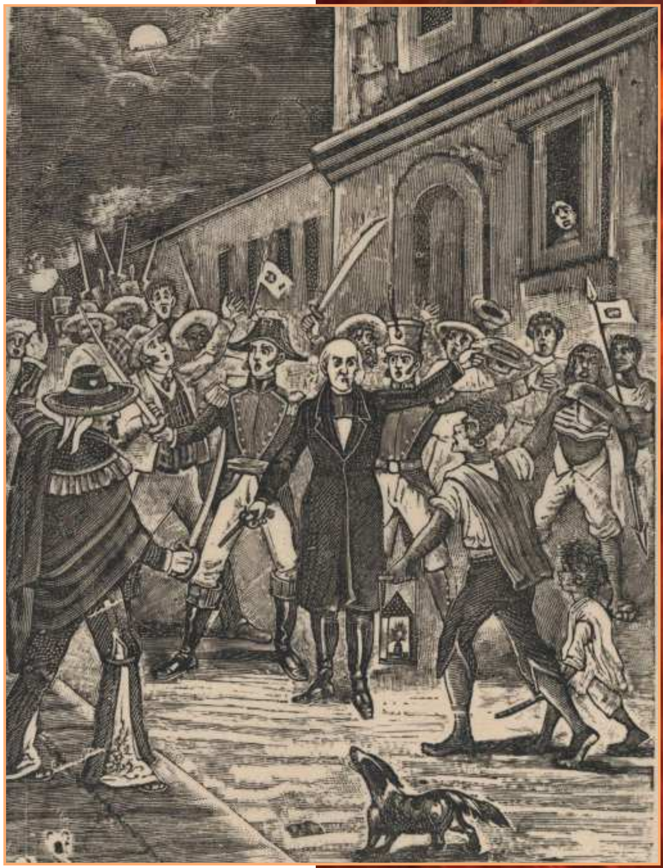
Visitors to Guanajuato often liken it to famous European medieval hill towns such as San Gimignano in Tuscany.

On 28 September 1810 violence engulfed this sleepy Mexican town, its cobbled streets ran slick with blood and the pure mountain air rang with cries of "Mueran los Gachupines!" ("Death to the Spaniards!"). The town's hastily constructed defences, thrown up against an imminent invasion, were quickly overwhelmed by a huge, ill-disciplined army of mostly peasant rebels bearing banners emblazoned with the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe. The wealthier white residents took refuge with as much valuable property as they could carry in the fortress-like municipal granary, the Alhóndiga, which today is a museum dedicated to Mexican independence. At the start of the five-hour siege the Spanish military officer and royal governor commanding the defenders was killed and his officer son soon after. Later, a mine labourer among the besiegers tied a flagstone to his back to protect him from the gunfire raining down from atop the Alhóndiga and set its huge wooden doors ablaze.

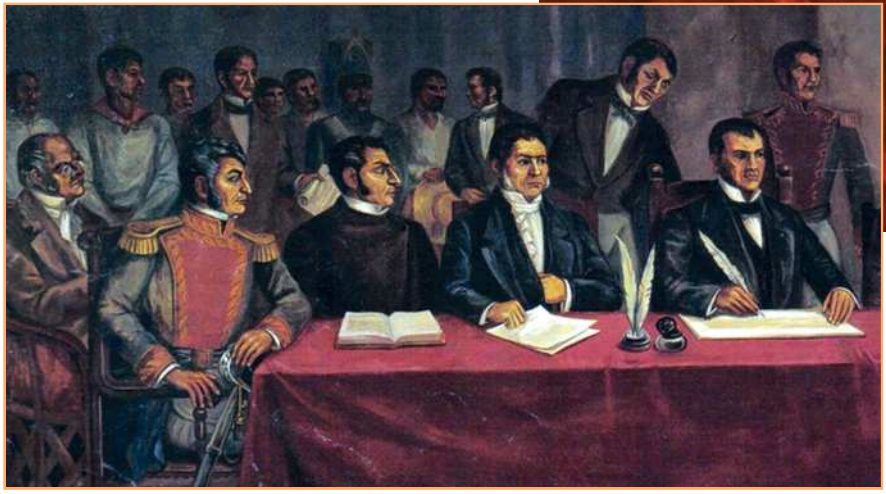
Today this man, Juan José de los Reyes Martínez Amaro, who died peacefully in his bed in his 80s, is celebrated as 'El Pípila' in a heroic monument above the city. The defences breached, the attackers flooded in and when the frenzy of violence subsided the building's interior was strewn with the dead bodies of defenders and Spanish residents who had sought refuge there. Estimates of the dead have ranged between 300 and about 1,000. The valuables in the Alhóndiga were carried off – silver ingots, money, jewellery, even the victims' clothing. For weeks the city's markets sold items of personal property looted from the dead defenders; poor peasants and labourers walked around town sporting silks over their ragged clothing. This famous opening salvo in the violent process of Mexico's birth as an independent nation marked the beginning of a decade of internal warfare in the much-prized Spanish colony of New Spain, as Mexico was then known. Independence came in 1821, exactly three centuries after Hernán Cortés' epic conquest of the Aztecs.

Presiding over the attack on the town, but never in control of its fearful violence, was a middle-aged Catholic priest: Father Miguel Gregorio Antonio Ignacio Hidalgo y Costilla Gallaga Mandarte y Villaseñor. A man of excellent education, wide reading, progressive political attitudes and deep sympathy toward the poor, he was also fond of dance and good conversation. Above average height, robust in body if slightly stooped, his animated face was dominated by green eyes and a halo of white hair surrounding his balding head. Over the years his liberal lifestyle included the company of several mistresses, his vow of priestly chastity notwithstanding. This was not common among Catholic priests but not completely unheard of, either.

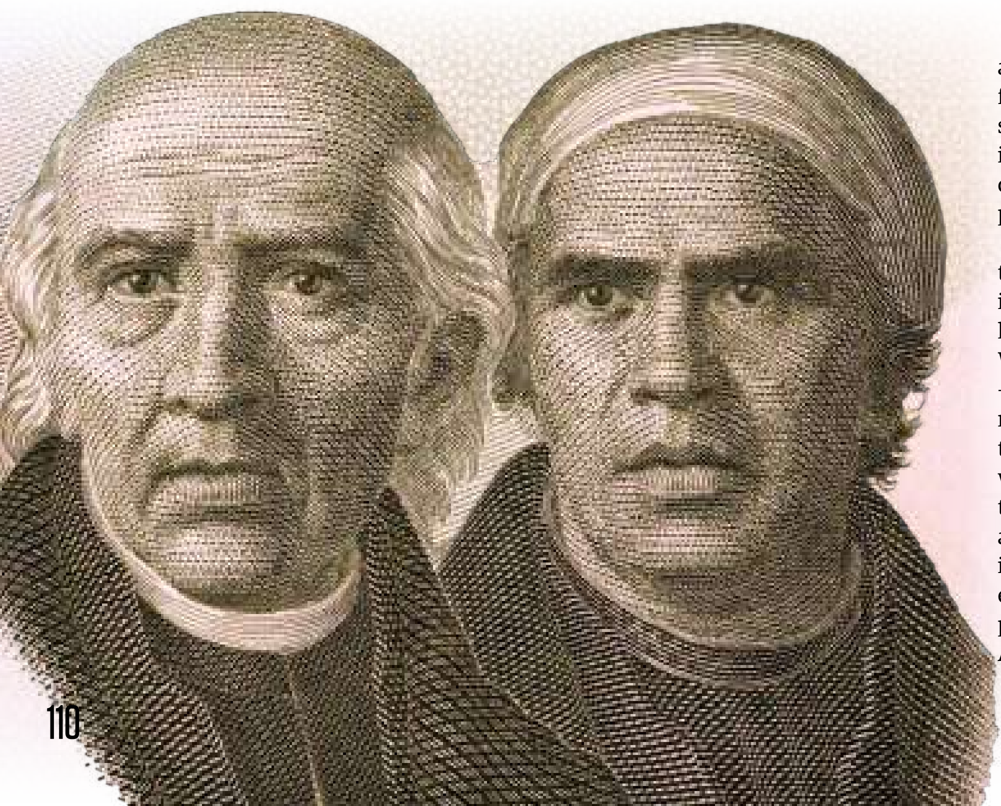
Father Miguel Hidalgo, as he has come to be known, kicked off the movement for Mexican independence from Spain (although it is not clear exactly what he intended, and he didn't actually live to see it realised). Of the rebellions that tore Spain's New World colonies from her and created independent nation-states – Argentina, Colombia, Chile and the other Spanish-American republics (Brazil was a Portuguese colony) – Mexico's was perhaps the bloodiest and longest (1810-21). Mexican independence was a direct outgrowth of the era of Napoleonic warfare that touched virtually all of Europe, warfare which in turn was a product of the French Revolution of 1789. Yet the Mexican insurgency was as much a civil war as a war of national liberation, embracing elements of class conflict (the poor against the privileged) and racial conflict (brown people against white). And it was marked by savage violence, widespread death and



RIGHT Hidalgo leading a crowd through the streets, calling for revolution



BELOW The Congress of Chilpancingo in 1813 endorsed Mexico's declaration of independence



BOTTOM Hidalgo (left) and Jose María Morelos on the Mexican Pesos banknote. Morelos took over leadership of the revolutionary movement after Hidalgo's death destruction, and profound social disruption. These were not propitious circumstances in which to establish a new nation, as the instability of the succeeding decades proved. The Siege of Guanajuato foreshadowed all of this, since the besiegers were for the most part humble people of colour led by Creoles (Mexican-born Spaniards, of whom Father Hidalgo was one) and the victims primarily of wealthy Creoles who'd grown rich from silver mining, land ownership, commerce or high public office. The American and French Revolutions provided some inspiration for the decade-long insurgency, of course, as did a liberal constitution in Spain herself in 1812. But the inter-racial violence of several largely indigenous uprisings in the Andean area in the early 1780s, and the massive anti-colonial slave rebellion on the French sugar island of Saint Domingue (modern Haiti) beginning in 1791, scared most Mexican whites, especially those of property, into opposing Hidalgo's movement for fear of a race war in which they would be overwhelmed by the brown majority of the colony's population of about six million. One tough Spanish general sent to New Spain/Mexico to put down the rebellion remarked that had it not been for Hidalgo's "absurd insurrection" the country would have gained its independence much sooner.

MAKING A REBEL

Hidalgo was born in 1753 to a mother who traced her ancestry back to the founder of the important western Mexican city of Valladolid, today's beautiful Morelia. His father was the moderately well-to-do manager of a large rural estate with considerable property to his name. On both sides Hidalgo was of 'pure' Spanish descent. He spent the first 12 years of his life on an estate near Guanajuato, had several siblings, and lost his mother in childbirth when he was eight years old. His father had the means to send him and his elder brother to study at a Jesuit school in Valladolid, where he returned after a brief hiatus for advanced studies to prepare him for the priesthood. He won distinction in theology courses, but also studied Aristotelian physics, Latin literature and grammar, logic and ethics. Along the way he acquired competence in Italian, French and the indigenous languages Tarascan, Nahuatl (the tongue of the Aztecs) and Otomi. He distinguished himself in his studies with his intelligence, learning and logical thinking, earning the nickname El Zorro (The Fox) for his quick wit in debate over abstruse theological questions. After a time in Mexico City he was ordained a priest in 1778, at the age of 25, but never completed doctoral studies for reasons that remain obscure. Hidalgo himself remarked that he did not pursue the degree because the university in the capital was "a pack of ignoramuses", a clue to his view of himself.

> "HIDALGO'S INTELLIGENCE, LEARNING AND LOGICAL THINKING EARNED HIM THE NICKNAME EL ZORRO – THE FOX"

Despite his obvious contempt for the fustian backwardness of the colonial higher education system, Hidalgo taught in Valladolid at the Colegio de San Nicolás Obispo, a sort of hybrid between a high school and an undergraduate institution for young men, which is today an important public institution: the Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo. He came to hold chairs in Latin and philosophy, worked to install more modern curricula, and wrote essays on education and theology that antagonised the theological reactionaries on the faculty.

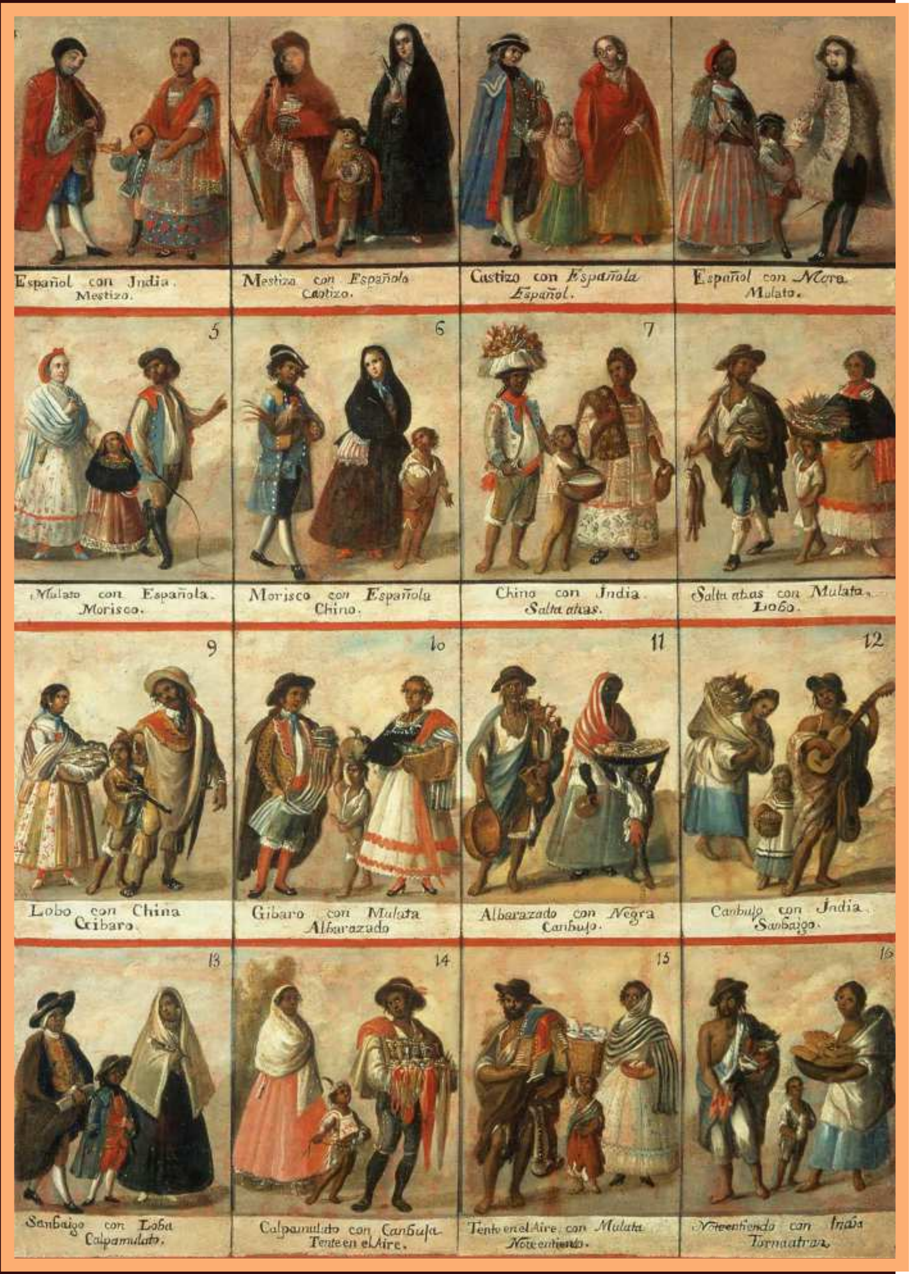


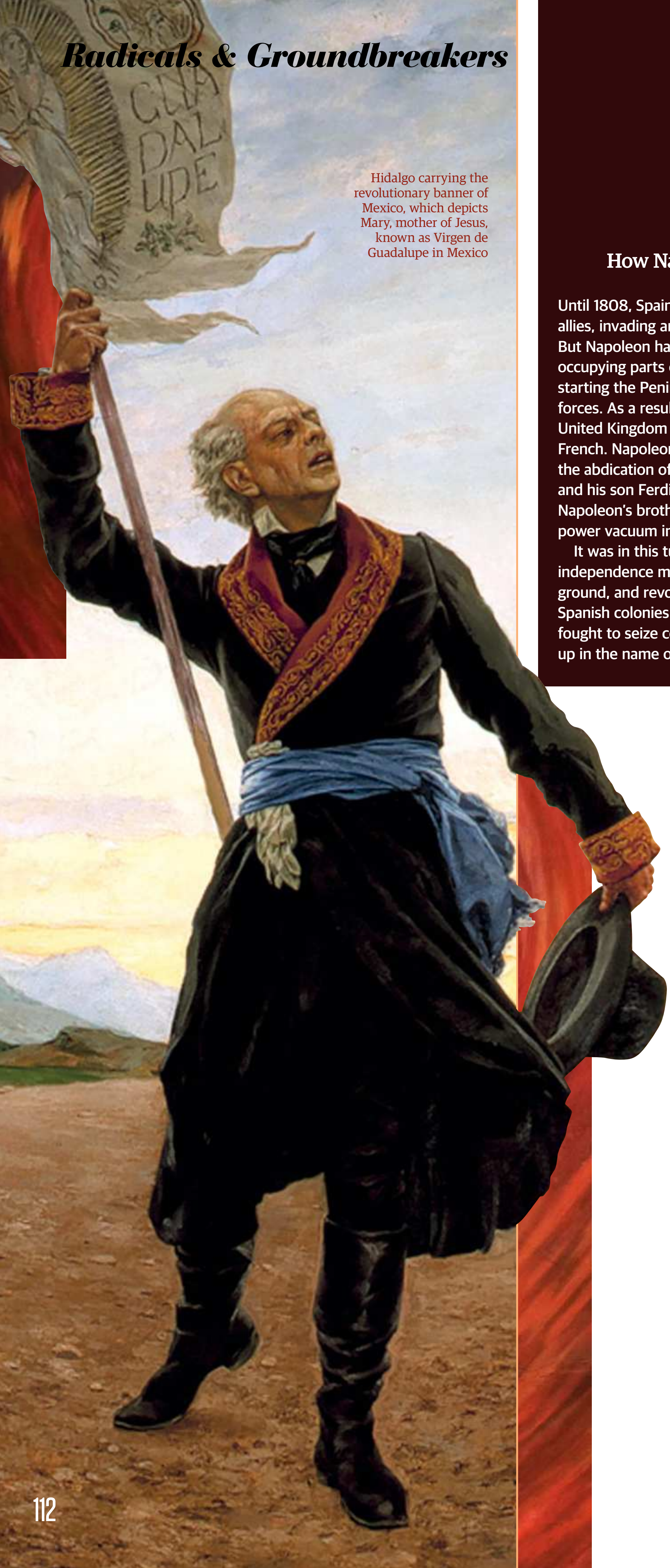
Image source: wiki/Museo Nacional del Virreinato

RACE AND REVOLUTION

What did it mean to be a Mexican?

The Spanish had run Mexico under the Casta System in which a person's position in the social hierarchy was determined by their ethnic background. Peninsulares were Spaniards who'd been born in Spain and they held the highest rank, with access to the best jobs. Next came Creoles – people of Spanish descent who'd been born in the New World. Mestizos were people of mixed Spanish and indigenous ancestry; Pardos had mixed Spanish, indigenous and African heritage; Indios was the term used for indigenous Mexicans; Mulattos was the term used for those of mixed African and European descent, Zambos were of mixed indigenous and African lineage, and the lowest caste of all were the African slaves.

Those leading the independence movement were mostly from the Creole caste, who resented being looked down upon simply for being born in Central America. They pushed for the dissolution of the Casta System, which helped to bring in support from others who were even more oppressed by its racial hierarchy. After independence, many of the old prejudices remained and slavery was not fully abolished in Mexico until 1837, 16 years after the War of Independence ended. After the 1910 revolution, the term Mestizo was widely adopted as a form of post-colonial identity all Mexicans could relate to, recognising the mix of indigenous and European heritage in the country.



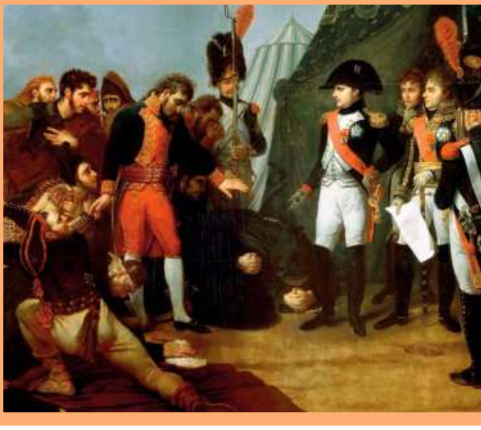
Hidalgo carrying the revolutionary banner of Mexico, which depicts Mary, mother of Jesus, known as Virgen de Guadalupe in Mexico

CHEERS BONAPARTE!

How Napoleon helped kick-start the Mexican Revolution

Until 1808, Spain and France had been allies, invading and occupying Portugal. But Napoleon had a wider plan in mind, occupying parts of Spain as well and starting the Peninsula War with Spanish forces. As a result Portugal and the United Kingdom joined Spain to fight the French. Napoleon's betrayal also forced the abdication of Spanish King Carlos IV and his son Ferdinand VII, replaced by Napoleon's brother Joseph, leaving a power vacuum in the Spanish colonies.

It was in this turmoil that the Mexican independence movement found fertile ground, and revolts erupted in many of the Spanish colonies as the local populations fought to seize control. The juntas set up in the name of the king to try to maintain control were too fractured and weak to hold on to power. The Spanish Constitution, adopted in 1812, set the stage for local representation, which brought additional support for independence.



Hidalgo ascended the ranks at San Nicolás to become rector in 1790, earning a salary sufficient for him to buy three haciendas in the region, yet all of them burdened with debt. In 1792 he resigned the rectorship rather suddenly when it was found that he had accumulated a substantial debt for the institution out of his generosity, extravagance and carelessness with the accounts rather than any questionable intent.

A series of parish assignments followed, bearing Hidalgo inexorably to his fateful encounter in Guanajuato. In 1792 he took up duties as the parish priest of Colima, slightly to the southwest of Valladolid, near the Pacific coast, where he remained only eight months. In short order he moved on to the more prosperous parish of San Felipe de los Herreros, just 80km from Guanajuato, officiating there for a decade. In 1803 he ended up even closer to Guanajuato, in the town of Dolores, earning a comfortable living and residing in a large household that included a younger brother and two illegitimate daughters. (Today the town is known as Dolores Hidalgo, 'The Cradle of Mexican Independence'.)

Through these two decades the good padre enjoyed the favours of at least three women in long-term relationships unblessed by clergy, relationships which produced five children. He enjoyed an increasing degree of personal freedom in Dolores, delegating many of his priestly duties to vicars. He came to the attention of the Spanish Inquisition for his unguarded statements to friends questioning papal infallibility, suggesting that sex outside marriage was a natural human proclivity rather than a sin, making favourable comments about Islam, praising the qualities of republicanism, and expressing Francophilic opinions. But he was never prosecuted. His parish of Dolores came to be known as Francia Chiquita ('Little France') from the informality of social manners in Hidalgo's orbit, and quite possibly also because of his reading habits, which may have included works by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the French encyclopédistes and other writings of advanced social and political tendencies. His home became a centre of literary and social activity for the local elite, and he was on familiar terms with the first families of

Guanajuato, including that of the governor who was later killed in the 1810 attack. Hidalgo also devoted much time, effort and personal wealth to the development of small-scale industry in the neighbourhood in order to create employment for the common people, including the cultivation and weaving of silk, pottery-making, a tannery, and other activities whose products were sold in local markets.

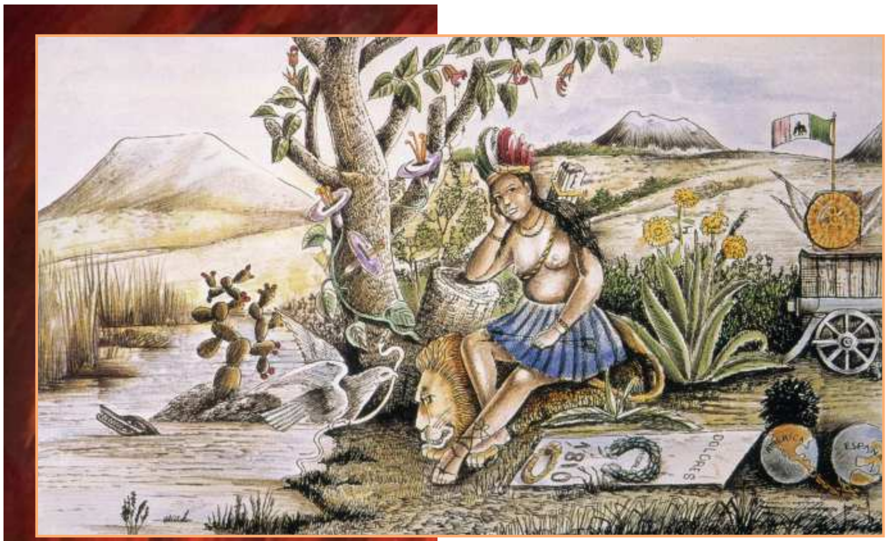
REVOLT AND LEGACY

The story of the Mexican independence movement has been told many times but can only be summarised here in the very broadest of strokes. In 1808 Napoleon Bonaparte, Emperor of France, invaded Spain, forcing the abdication of King Carlos IV in favour of his son Ferdinand VII, and of Ferdinand in favour of Napoleon's elder brother Joseph, who became José I of Spain and its American dominions. The French were expelled from Spain in 1814, after six years of intense guerrilla warfare, by a combination of Spanish loyalist and British forces. The usurpation of the Spanish throne created a political vacuum in the Spanish-American colonies. Some elite citizens in Mexico believed that in the absence of a legitimate Spanish monarch, sovereignty reverted to the colonies, while others held that sovereignty stayed in Spain and the ad hoc authorities that arose there in King Ferdinand's name.

The politics of this became extremely complicated and chaotic from 1808. Hidalgo believed that the French regime in Spain threatened the observance of the Catholic faith due to the history of Jacobin radicalism in the earlier phases of the revolution, and that the 'godless' French would attempt to gain control of New Spain militarily. Because of this fear, in 1810 Hidalgo launched an uprising. This quickly gathered thousands of common people into its ranks, inspired by the priest's charismatic personality and by widespread fears for traditional Mexican religious practices. They were also motivated by class and racial resentments against the European-born Spaniards who held much of the colony's wealth and many of its high offices, both civil and ecclesiastical. After a conspiracy with other like-minded men was denounced to the colonial authorities, Hidalgo issued the Grito de Dolores ('The Cry of Dolores') from the door of his parish church to a large crowd in the early hours of 16 September 1810. (The day is now celebrated annually as Mexico's Independence Day). We do not have the text of his passionate exhortation, some approximation of which is repeated by the Mexican president from the balcony of the national palace on Mexico City's Zócalo every Independence Day. However, we know it included something like: "Long live Ferdinand VII! Long live America! Death to bad government!" And later in the rebellion the words "Long Live the Virgin of Guadalupe!" were added.

"HIDALGO IS SEEN AS A SORT OF SECULAR SAINT, THE VISIONARY FATHER OF HIS COUNTRY MARTYRED ON THE ALTAR OF INDEPENDENCE"

BELOW Mexico is depicted as an Indigenous woman, considering her future after the Mexican War of Independence



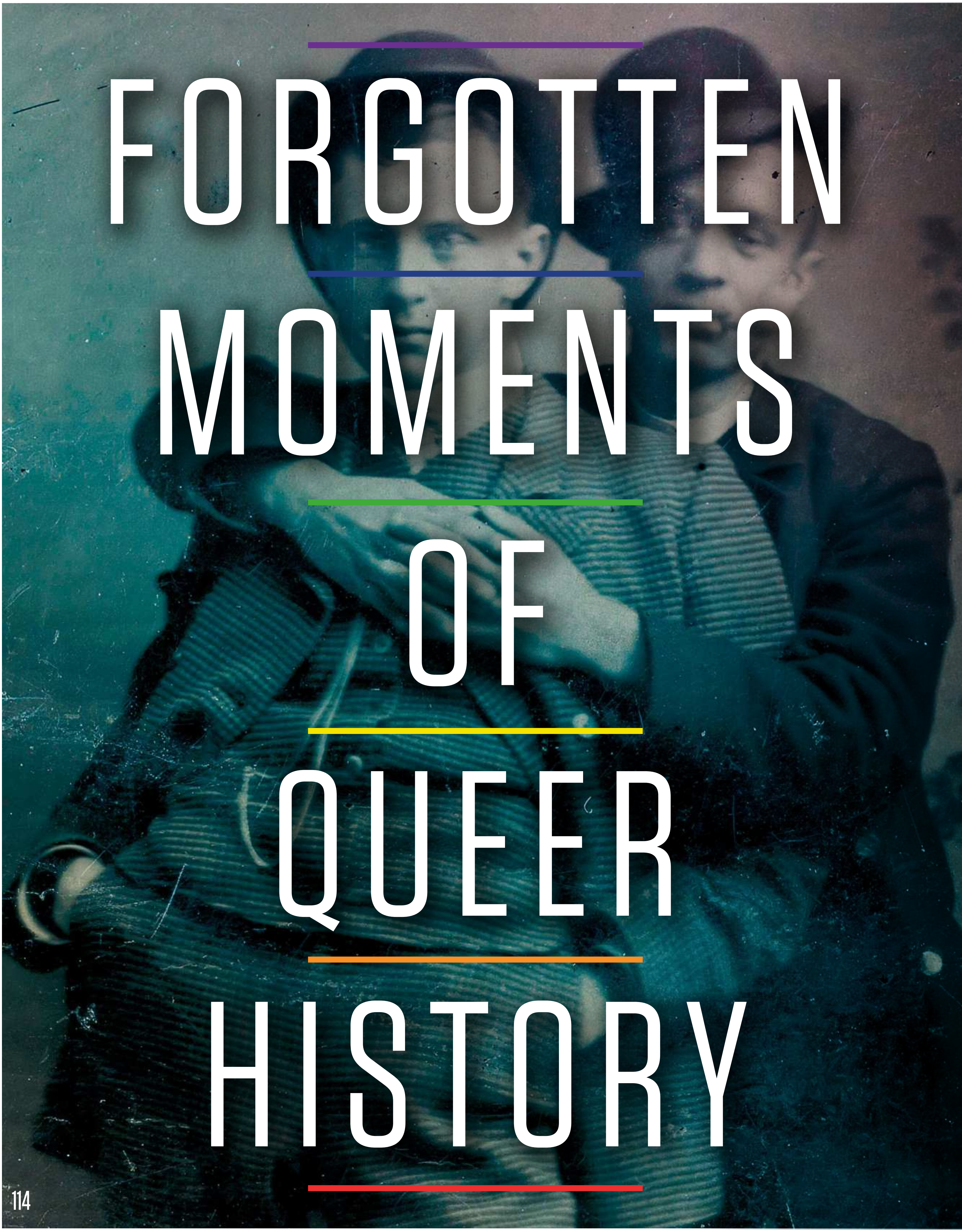
BOTTOM The monument to El Pípila, the man who torched the Alhóndiga gates on 28 September 1810 to aid Hidalgo's forces

After the seizure of Guanajuato and some other early and quite bloody military successes, Hidalgo's disorganised movement, which at one point early in 1811 embraced up to 80,000 people, quickly fell apart owing to mass defections, internal conflicts between him and other leaders, and the much more efficient Spanish royalist military force it faced. Hidalgo was captured along with several lieutenants on his flight toward the United States through northern New Spain, degraded from the priesthood, and executed on 11 July 1811. His severed head was hung in a cage from Guanajuato's Alhóndiga.

The struggle he began was continued by other men; it waxed and waned for a decade, and produced its quota of heroes and villains. Mexican independence finally came in 1821 through a combination of a pro-independence military conspiracy in New Spain by former royalist officers, war exhaustion on both sides, and the political circumstances in Europe.

In the plainest terms, Hidalgo's legacy was the independence of his country. Although today there is still some controversy over who 'consummated' Mexican independence after the rebel priest's early death, there is no question that without Hidalgo independence would not have come about in the way that did. Many Mexican conservatives have painted him as a villain because of the violence his decade-long uprising unleashed, with its overtones of a race war by people of colour against whites, and for what many believed was a legacy of violence and instability in Mexican political and social life that endured for much of the century. But the liberal-nationalist view that has come to dominate Mexicans' idea of their history exalts Hidalgo as the equivalent of George Washington in the United States, or of Simón Bolívar in much of Spanish-speaking South America. Hidalgo is seen as a sort of secular saint, the visionary father of his country martyred on the altar of independence. His image appears in patriotic celebrations, on currency, in works of art and literature, and even in comic books. His name is ubiquitous in the country – a state is named after him, as are a number of towns. The irony is that in advocating independence for New Spain while also acclaiming King Ferdinand VII, it has never been exactly clear what Hidalgo had in mind politically.

FORGOTTEN MOMENTS OF QUEER HISTORY



To celebrate LGBT+ History Month, we explore 10 overlooked individuals and events in the fight for equality

Written by Callum McKelvie

As queer history continues to be more widely celebrated and explored, scholars are uncovering stories that up until now were lost to time. Individuals who were once condemned as outcasts are now being re-examined and reclaimed. With greater understanding regarding both gender and sexuality, we are able to collectively shed new light on previously overlooked queer stories. This work has uncovered a veritable treasure trove of tales that provide insight on LGBTQ+ life in the past as well valuable lessons for today. While some of the people presented here lived complex and troubled lives, their stories often remain profound examples of the cruelty and discrimination so often faced by queer persons and the bravery shown in the face of it.

EXPERT BIOS

Image by: Holly Hunter

DR ELLIOT EVANS
Elliot Evans is the author of *Queer Permeability: The Body in French Queer Thought from Wittig to Preciado* (2020). They teach on the Master's programme in Sexuality and Gender Studies at the University of Birmingham (UK) and are co-organiser of the interdisciplinary seminar series Critical Sexology.

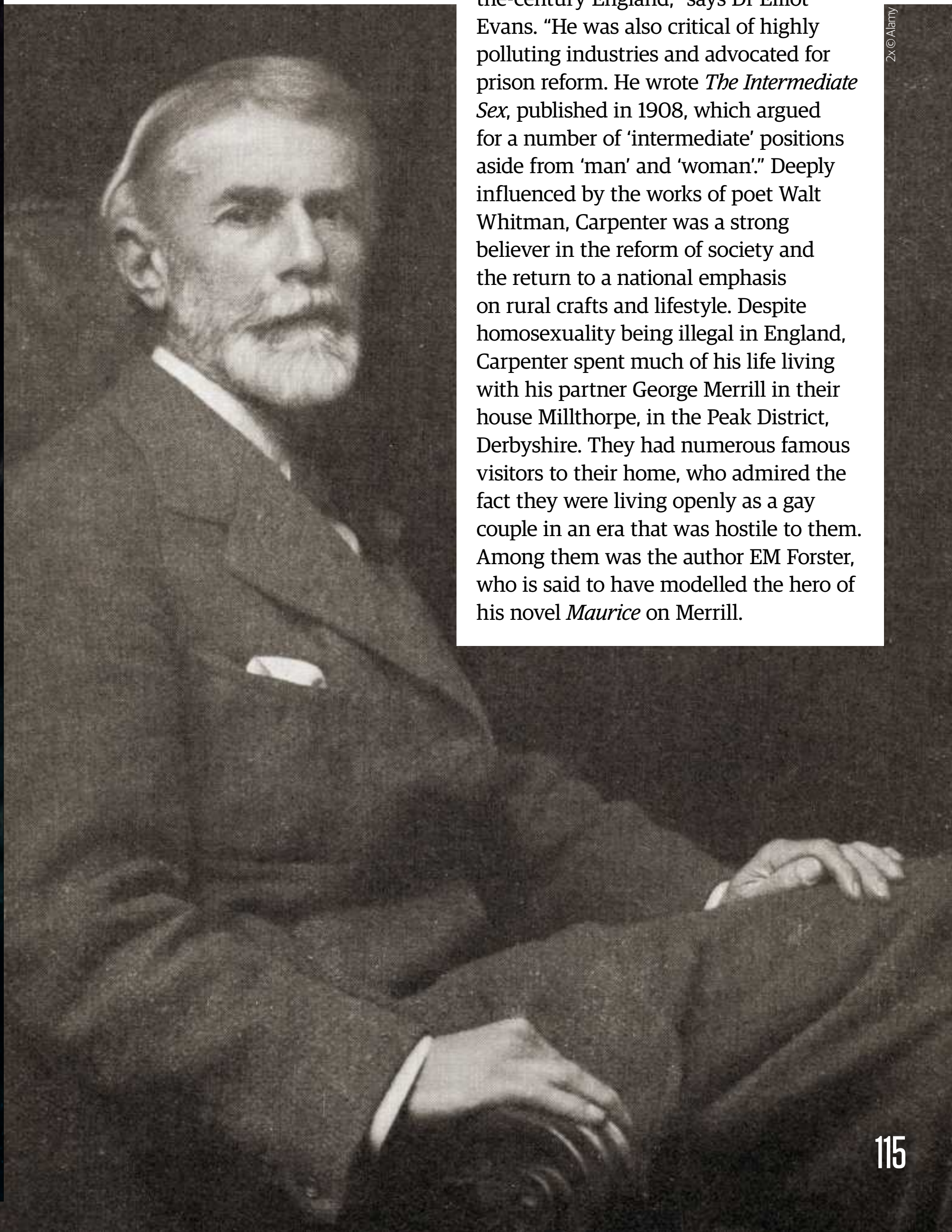
Image by: M Sharkey

HUGH RYAN
Hugh Ryan is a historian, curator and writer, and the author of *The Women's House of Detention: A Queer History of a Forgotten Prison*, due out in May.

EDWARD CARPENTER

The openly gay man who defied the laws of Victorian Britain and advocated for the acceptance of queer individuals

During the 1800s and early 1900s, Great Britain was not a welcoming place to LGBTQ+ persons. In 1895, famed Irish poet and playwright Oscar Wilde was placed on trial for 'gross indecency', creating a national scandal. It may come as something of a shock to discover that a mere 13 years later Edward Carpenter, an openly gay man, published a book entitled *The Intermediate Sex* that argued that homosexuality was a legitimate love that needed to be accepted. "Carpenter was a socialist, a vegetarian and a campaigner for gay rights in turn-of-the-century England," says Dr Elliot Evans. "He was also critical of highly polluting industries and advocated for prison reform. He wrote *The Intermediate Sex*, published in 1908, which argued for a number of 'intermediate' positions aside from 'man' and 'woman'." Deeply influenced by the works of poet Walt Whitman, Carpenter was a strong believer in the reform of society and the return to a national emphasis on rural crafts and lifestyle. Despite homosexuality being illegal in England, Carpenter spent much of his life living with his partner George Merrill in their house Millthorpe, in the Peak District, Derbyshire. They had numerous famous visitors to their home, who admired the fact they were living openly as a gay couple in an era that was hostile to them. Among them was the author EM Forster, who is said to have modelled the hero of his novel *Maurice* on Merrill.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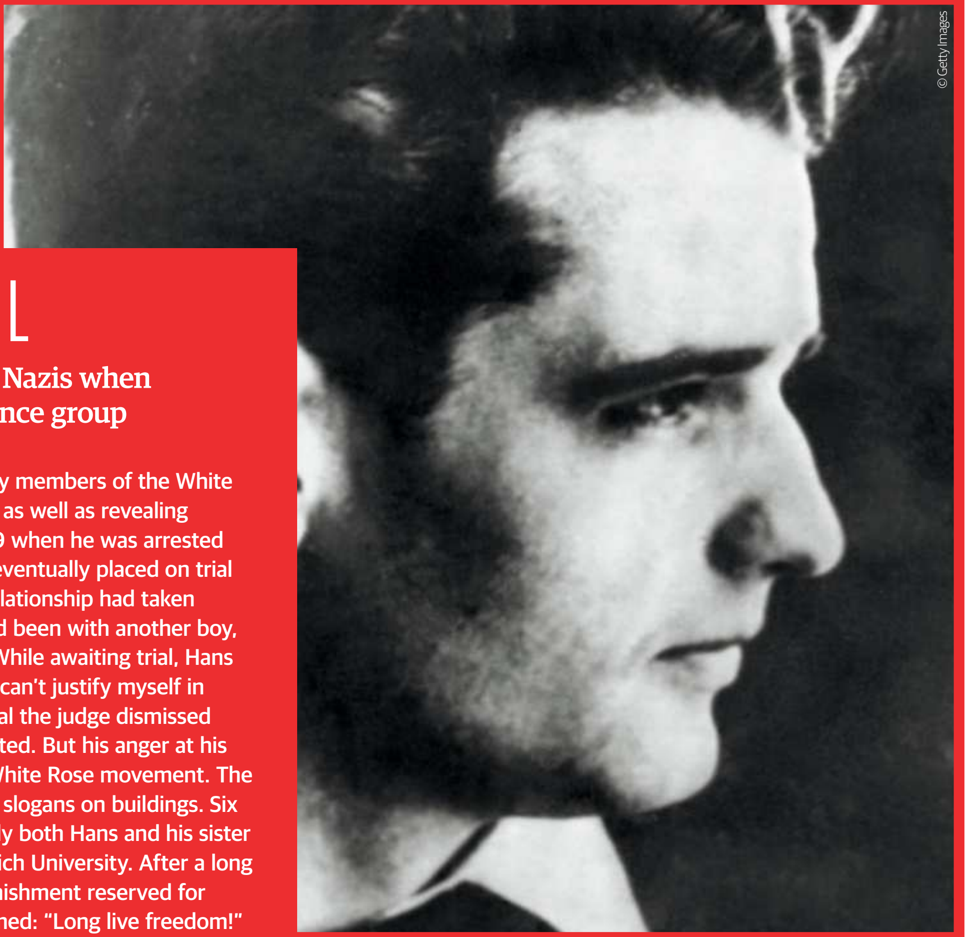
DAVID WOJNAROWICZ

A confrontational artist whose work challenges and critiques the handling of the AIDs crisis

In 2010, the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery in Washington became embroiled in controversy when it removed a video from one its exhibitions after it was alleged to have caused offense. In one scene, the video showed a crucifix crawling with ants and caused the Catholic League and Republican Representatives to cry foul. The resulting anger led to a silent protest and a broader discussion about artistic freedom. The artist in question? David Wojnarowicz. "He was an artist, poet and writer who contracted HIV during the early years of the pandemic in New York," says Evans. "He wrote blistering critiques of the politicians and pharmaceutical companies who mismanaged the crisis, and who he saw as simply disregarding the lives of the gay men, people of colour, drug users and sex workers it disproportionately affected." Born in 1954, Wojnarowicz settled in New York during the late 1970s and quickly established himself in the city's East Village art scene. His most famous work, *A Fire In My Belly*, is the same piece that caused the 2010 controversy, a short black and white film mostly created between 1986 and 1987 that was unfinished at the time of Wojnarowicz's death in 1996. "Wojnarowicz's work is by no means 'comfortable' to read or to look at," says Evans. "But its darkness holds a huge amount of power."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HANS SCHOLL

The openly gay man who defied the Nazis when he founded the White Rose resistance group

Along with his sister, Sophie, Hans Scholl was one of the key members of the White Rose – a resistance group that openly denounced the Nazis as well as revealing details about the Holocaust. Hans, born in 1918, was only 19 when he was arrested for membership of a forbidden youth movement, but was eventually placed on trial for engaging in a homosexual affair when he was 16. The relationship had taken place when Hans was a member of the Hitler Youth and had been with another boy, who later divulged details of the romance to the Gestapo. While awaiting trial, Hans wrote to his parents that he was "not afraid," and "even if I can't justify myself in an open court, I can justify myself to myself." During the trial the judge dismissed the relationship as a "youthful failing," and Hans was acquitted. But his anger at his treatment, as well as that of others, led him to create the White Rose movement. The group distributed leaflets and sprayed anti-Nazi graffiti and slogans on buildings. Six pamphlets were published in their thousands, but eventually both Hans and his sister were caught and arrested while distributing leaflets at Munich University. After a long trial both were sentenced to execution by beheading, a punishment reserved for 'political traitors'. As he was led to his death, Scholl proclaimed: "Long live freedom!"

ROBERTA COWELL

The first British woman to undergo male-to-female gender reassignment surgery was also a WWII pilot and racing driver

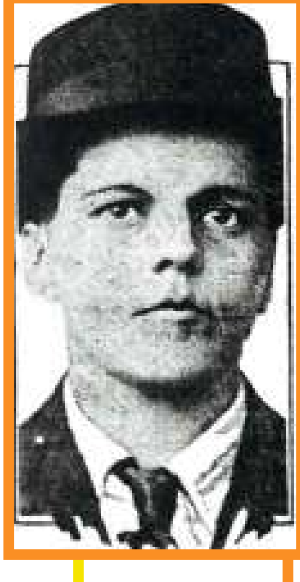
In 1950 Roberta Cowell, born Robert, met Michael Dillion, a female-to-male trans person and physician who was the first British person to undergo phalloplasty surgery. After lengthy talks with Dillion, Cowell decided to have gender reassignment surgery herself, performed by Sir Harold Gillies, considered by many to be the father of plastic surgery. As news of the operation became public Cowell faced constant shaming and transphobia, as well as struggling financially due to a lack of work. This may have led to Cowell's views towards gender reassignment surgery changing in her later years, stating: "Many of those people will regret the operation later. There have been attempted suicides." In 1972 Cowell also said that she had a rare chromosomal disorder known as 'XX Male Syndrome' and that individuals with XY chromosomes who underwent gender reassignment surgery had turned themselves into "freaks". Why Cowell felt the need to distance herself from other trans individuals remains unknown, though it's possible it may have been linked to the discrimination and abuse she faced in the years after her operation. After a final interview in 1972, Cowell retired from public life and for a long time was all but forgotten. It was only in 2013, two years after her death, that the *Independent* newspaper reported her passing. Despite Cowell's later views her transition remains an important moment in the history of transgender British people.

© Getty Images

HARRY ALLEN

This female-to-male trans individual was a rebel of the Pacific Northwest

Born Nell Pickerell in 1882, Harry Allen (sometimes Livingstone) lived as a man when to do so was not socially acceptable. The media of the time had little understanding and even less respect for a trans individual and portrayed Allen as a fragrant seducer and womaniser. Allen had a difficult childhood, with a father who was abusive and alcoholic. At 18 the troubled young man left home and almost immediately gained the attention of the press as a subject of whimsy and amusement due to their being seen as a woman wearing men's clothing. Allen reportedly left a trail of broken hearts and a number newspaper stories of attempted suicide by women who'd fallen in love with him. The press suggested that this was due to Allen being trans and turned him into a figure of notoriety. Allen had legitimate explanations for the stories and solid denials for those that the papers had flagrantly made up. Despite this Allen soon developed a reputation as an outlaw. His reputation made him a target for law enforcement and he regularly found himself arrested and imprisoned. In the early 1910s Allen was interviewed by Miriam Van Waters, a prison reformer and anthropologist, who upon meeting Allen stated that his criminal record was "the result of discrimination." Allen passed away in 1922 at the age of 40. He remains an important example of the damage that can be caused by media and societal discrimination and abuse towards trans individuals.



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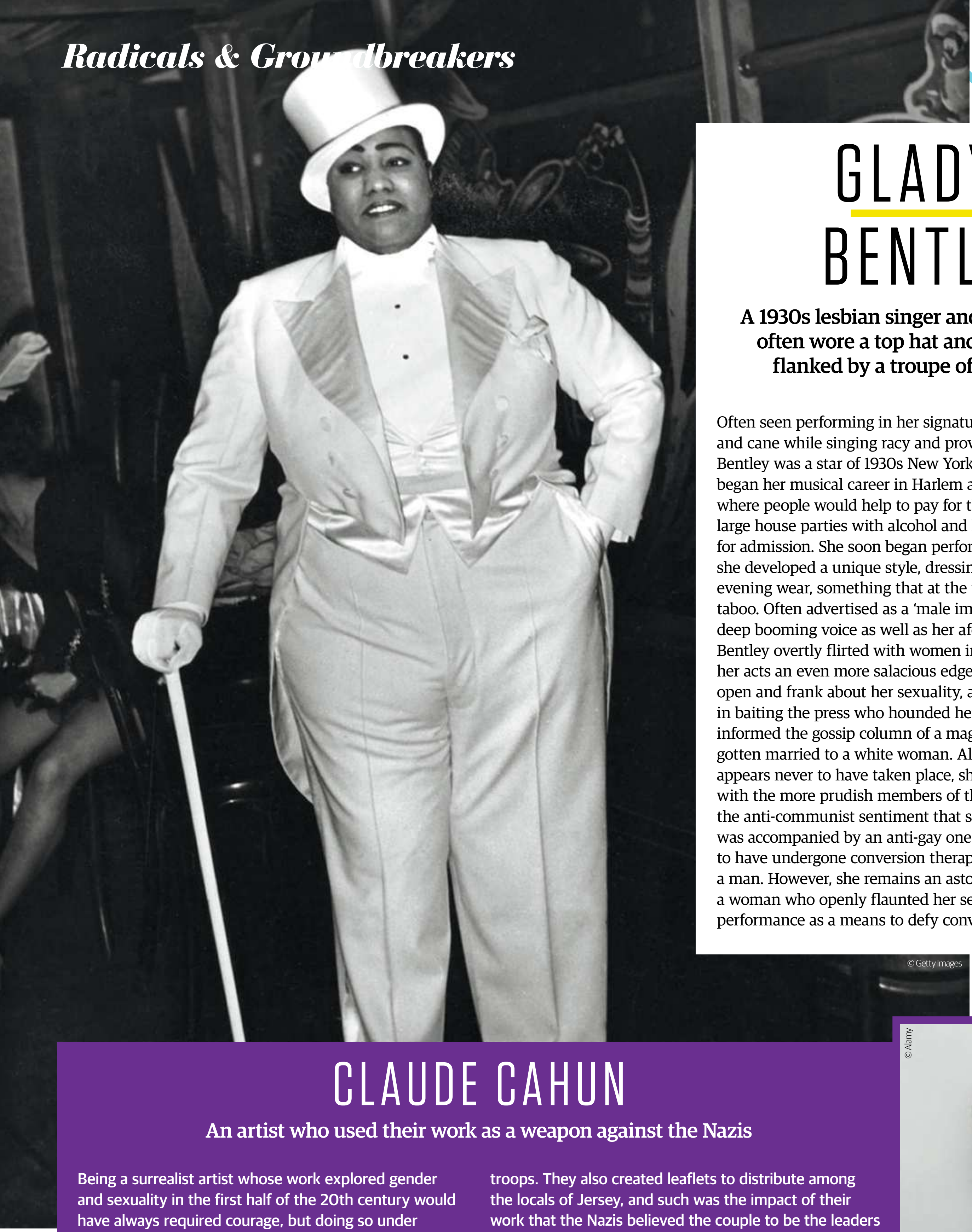

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GLADYS BENTLEY

A 1930s lesbian singer and performer who often wore a top hat and cane and was flanked by a troupe of drag queens

Often seen performing in her signature white tuxedo, top hat and cane while singing racy and provocative songs, Gladys Bentley was a star of 1930s New York nightlife. Bentley began her musical career in Harlem at 'rent parties', events where people would help to pay for their lodgings by hosting large house parties with alcohol and live music, charging for admission. She soon began performing in clubs where she developed a unique style, dressing in traditional men's evening wear, something that at the time was still seen as taboo. Often advertised as a 'male impersonator' due to her deep booming voice as well as her aforementioned clothing, Bentley overtly flirted with women in the audience, giving her acts an even more salacious edge. Bentley was always open and frank about her sexuality, appearing to have fun in baiting the press who hounded her. Once Bentley even informed the gossip column of a magazine that she had gotten married to a white woman. Although the marriage appears never to have taken place, she delighted in toying with the more prudish members of the press. In the 1950s the anti-communist sentiment that swept the United States was accompanied by an anti-gay one and Bentley claimed to have undergone conversion therapy, as well as marrying a man. However, she remains an astounding example of a woman who openly flaunted her sexuality and used performance as a means to defy convention.

CLAUDE CAHUN

An artist who used their work as a weapon against the Nazis

Being a surrealist artist whose work explored gender and sexuality in the first half of the 20th century would have always required courage, but doing so under the iron fist of the Nazis shows the extreme bravery of Claude Cahun. Cahun, born Lucy Renee Mathilde Schwob in 1894, is described by the Archives of Women Artists Research and Exhibitions as "the Queen of the photographic self portrait", and they used their art to fight back against the Nazis. "Cahun was a writer, photographer and artist of the avant-garde," explains Evans. "They were born in France but moved to Jersey, and were active in the resistance when the island was occupied by the Nazis." Here Cahun, along with their partner Marcel Moore, created anti-Nazi photomontages, which they left to cause distrust and anxiety among the troops. They also created leaflets to distribute among the locals of Jersey, and such was the impact of their work that the Nazis believed the couple to be the leaders of a large-scale resistance group. Cahun and Moore were arrested and sentenced to death, but were saved when the island was liberated in 1945. Cahun continued to live and work on Jersey until their death in 1954 at the age of 60. Cahun created numerous works of art that explored sexuality, gender and personality. "They should be remembered for their wonderful spirit of resistance, both in relation to the Nazi occupation but also to the gender and sexual roles expected of them during that period in France," says Evans. "Cahun is not unknown but their bravery and incredible artistic contributions are nowhere near enough celebrated."

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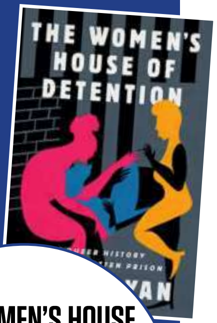
THE WOMEN'S HOUSE OF DETENTION

Between 1932 and 1974, New York was home to a women's prison, which became an oft-forgotten hub of queer culture

© Getty Images

For over 40 years a severe looking building dominated the skyline of New York's Greenwich Village: The Women's House of Detention. Famed for its art deco design, this women's prison became something of a hive of both lesbian and trans masculine culture. The detention centre also played a role in one of the most important moments in queer history. "An interesting element of the Stonewall uprising that is really forgotten is that the prison was 500 feet away from the Stonewall Inn," explains Hugh Ryan, author of *The Women's House of Detention*. "In fact, the incarcerated women and trans masculine individuals had windows that looked out onto the street. The night of the riots, there are women who write about seeing a riot inside the prison. In fact, many prisoners set fire to their belongings and threw them out the windows while chanting 'gay rights, gay rights, gay power!'"

The history of the detention centre goes back to the beginning of the 20th century, when New York's 'Night Court' attempted to hold and try suspected sex workers. "There is a law that mandates that there be a convenient detention centre for women, not where they will be incarcerated but where they will be held as they are being tried," says Ryan. However, following the Great Depression the concept of the detention centre changed and instead it became a prison, holding both those who were awaiting trial and those who had been convicted. Over the following decades the centre became a place where queer persons met like-minded individuals. Incarcerated in 1944 for possession of drugs, Florrie Fisher would later write in her autobiography that: "During the very first sentence I ever served, in the House of D, I discovered I could get emotionally involved with another woman. She was the first of about ten women I had lesbian relationships with during my years in jail." Soon lesbians and trans masculine persons began to refer to the House of D as 'the country club'. It was closed in 1971. Now, over 50 years after the Stonewall riots, why is the history of The Women's House of Detention largely forgotten? "We don't ever talk about queer people in prisons, it feels like we don't want to talk about them as important to the story of queer history," says Ryan. "They're ancillary, they're part of the riot that are never named. But if we pull the frame back a little bit we see that there is all this stuff that is knitted together."



THE WOMEN'S HOUSE OF DETENTION: A QUEER HISTORY OF A FORGOTTEN PRISON
IS OUT IN MAY FROM BOLD TYPE BOOKS

MARY JONES

This African-American sex worker defied the conventions of 1800s America, despite constant mockery

Born Peter Sewally, Mary Jones was a sex worker who in 1836 was arrested for stealing a wallet from Robert Haslem, a white mason worker. Following their arrest, Jones was searched and it was then that the constable realised Jones was biologically male. Jones appeared in court, according to *The New York Sun*, "neatly dressed in female attire", with the *New York World* stating that they were dressed "elegantly, and in perfect style". Throughout the proceedings Jones was berated and laughed at, with all manner of cruel jokes made at their expense. At one point, their wig was ripped off, resulting in a tremendous roar of laughter, and a malicious cartoon mocked them as "the horrific man-monster". Convicted of grand larceny, Jones was sentenced to five years in prison. Jones was also dubbed 'Beefsteak Pete', the nickname deriving from their prosthetic (possibly cow leather or some other such material) attached to a girdle that imitated female genitalia. Now Jones is remembered as a figure who defied convention, even while being paraded in front of a court and cruelly mocked.

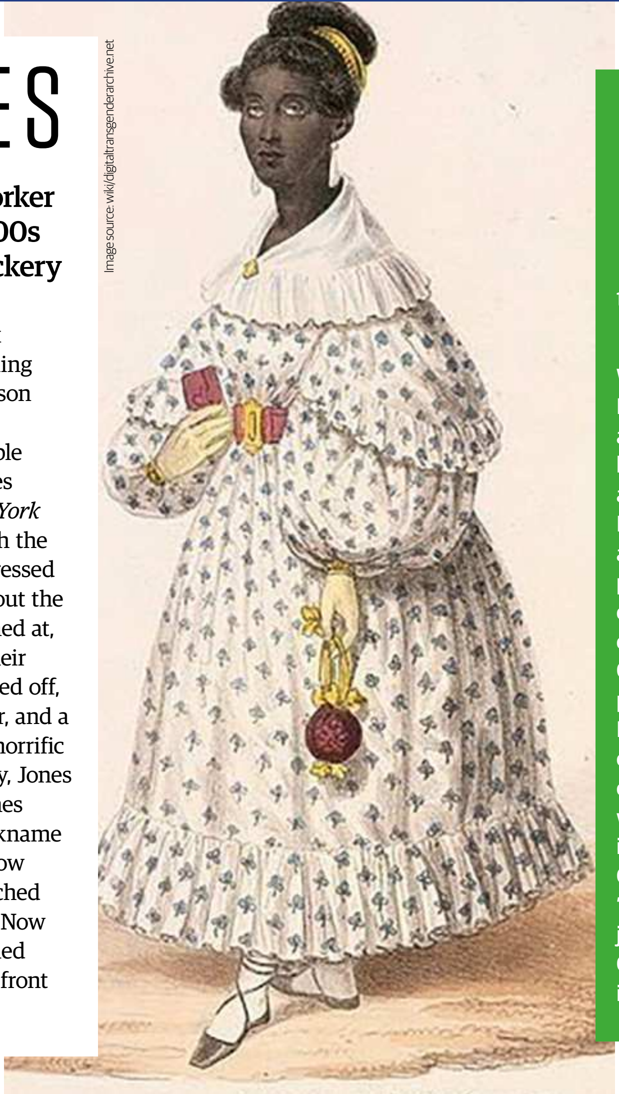
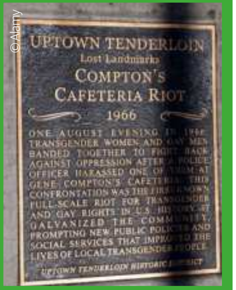


Image source: wiki/digitaltransgenderarchive.net

COMPTON'S CAFETERIA RIOT

This act of militant queer resistance in the US was three years before Stonewall



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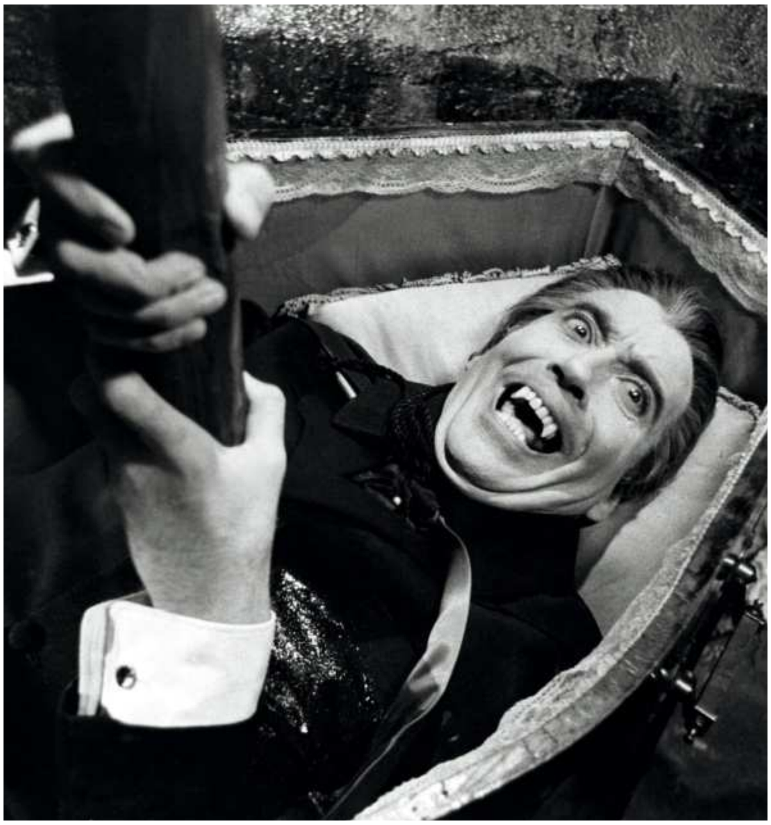
While the 1969 Stonewall Riots are rightly regarded as a watershed moment in queer history, three years earlier in a small all-night cafeteria in San Francisco a group of trans women and queer persons stood up to police harassment in what is considered the first recorded act of queer resistance. Compton's Cafeteria was a safe haven for trans individuals, but police regularly raided it and harassed its patrons. During one such raid a trans woman threw a mug of coffee in the face of one of the officers. Chaos erupted and the violence spilled out into the street, where a police car was set ablaze. Many of those involved were arrested and some were imprisoned. One of Compton's regulars, Felicia Flames, said: "We didn't give a shit about organising, we were just trying to survive." Despite its importance, the Compton's Cafeteria Riot was largely forgotten and is only now being given the attention it deserves.



MYTHS & LEGENDS

Tales to shock and amaze

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Far more than turning base metal into gold, this ancient art was the forebear of scientific discovery

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How America became obsessed with UFOs, little green men and more through the late 1940s and 1950s

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Why did medieval storytellers become occupied with tales of dragons and knights? We find out

THE SECRETS OF ALCHEMY

Far more than turning metal into gold, this ancient art has a rich history that covers chemistry, esotericism and philosophy

Written by Callum McKelvie

The dream of turning metal into gold is one that has obsessed man for centuries. The name of this mythical process is 'alchemy' and it's a word that inspires thoughts of medieval magic and the dark arts. To quote the scientist and scholar Lawrence Principe in his seminal work *The Secrets of Alchemy*: "The very word conjures up vivid images of the hidden, the mysterious and the arcane, of dark laboratories and wizard-like figures bent over glowing fires and bubbling cauldrons." Yet from the ancient world through to the medieval period and into the 20th century alchemy was a very real art, practised the world over. So much more than simply being another quest for gold, it was a complex form of speculative thought that also held promises of eternal youth. The history of alchemy is complex, blurring the lines between chemistry, esoteric ramblings and bizarre philosophy. Here we hope to offer a tantalising glimpse into another realm, digging beneath the surface to unearth at least a few of its secrets. We'll reveal the mystery of the Philosopher's Stone, explain the scientific impact of this ancient art and explore the life of the real Nicolas Flamel, among other wonders.

Alchemy is best known as a form of medieval chemical science and speculative philosophy. Its origins, however, both real and imagined, are far older than that. Traditional histories of alchemy state that the art began in Egypt, in line with the ancient Greek belief of Egypt as land of magic and secrets; this is called Egyptosophy, described by Eric Hornung as "the study of an imaginary Egypt viewed as the profound source of all esoteric lore". Following the conquest of the land by Alexander the Great during his campaigns of 334-323 BCE, Egypt became a vibrant centre of ideas and culture. It is from this period that the Leiden and Stockholm papyri (named after the museums they now reside in) date. According to Principe these texts "contain about 250 practical workshop recipes," including how to make imitations of valuable substances, such as how to colour silver to look like gold. However, while these papyri are perhaps the seed for much of what was to come, they lack the philosophical angle that would later define the practice and do not appear to discuss a physical transmutation. Despite the testimony of many later texts, these are the only two surviving documents from this period that have a link to the alchemical art. Later Byzantine compilations contain excerpts of some ▶

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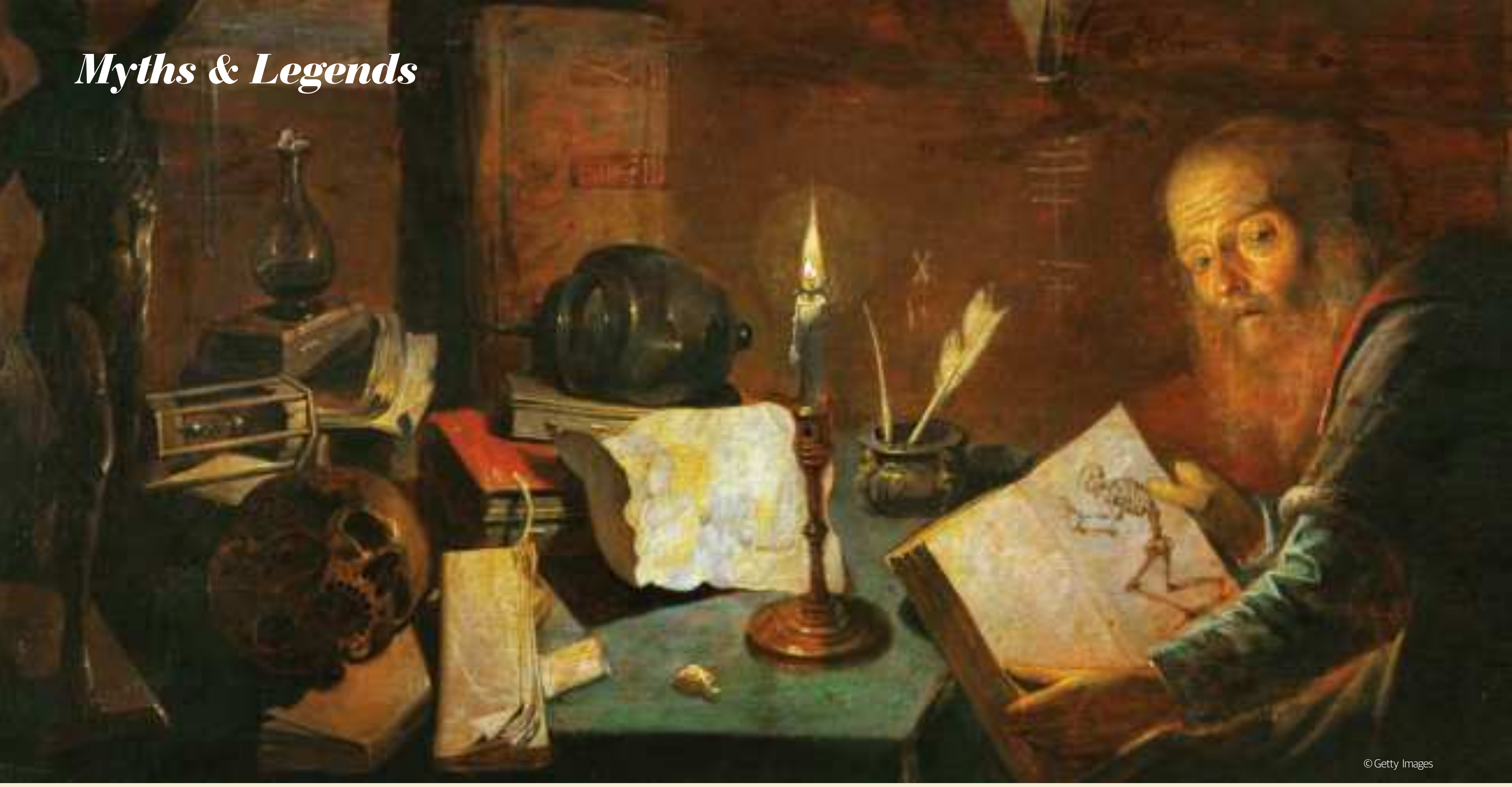
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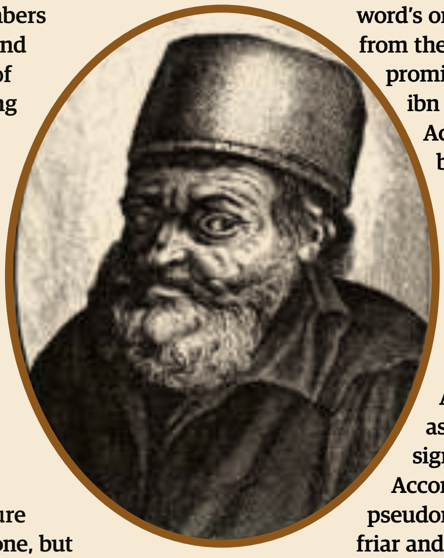
Greco-Roman works, but it is not enough to build a complete picture of the important early days of alchemy.

It was around 300 CE that arguably the first great alchemist was active: Zosimos of Panopolis, a practitioner whose work would define much of what was to come. Born, as his name might suggest, in Panopolis in Egypt, Zosimos composed a total of 28 works on chemistry – including one that contains the oldest beer recipe in the world. It is also with Zosimos that much of the magical and occult aspects of alchemy begin. He theorised that the universe was an expression of numbers and symbols, and discussed the effect that the stars and other celestial bodies had on mankind and the work of the alchemist. Zosimos was also integral in introducing the element of secrecy to the world of the alchemist, which led to many later alchemical works being written in code or metaphor.

Perhaps Zosimos' most famous work is *The Stone of Philosophy*, which describes a mysterious substance that very soon became the main goal of the alchemist. The 'stone' was most likely a potion or some form of powder that could be created in a laboratory, as opposed to a natural rock-like object. One alchemical text, *A Brief Guide to the Celestial Ruby*, states that: "Know, then, that it is called a stone, not because it is like a stone, but only because, by virtue of its fixed nature, it resists the action of fire as successfully as any stone. In species it is gold, more pure than the purest; it is fixed and incombustible like a stone, but its appearance is that of very fine powder, impalpable to the touch, sweet to the taste, fragrant to the smell." The stone was said to have many mysterious properties and, as well as turning metal into gold, it may also have held the secret to eternal life and immortality. Zosimos translated the work of Maria Hebrea (sometimes referred to as Mary the Jewess), who described two methods through which an alchemist could fabricate the stone. However, it is now understood that these may in fact have been processes to imitate the look of certain metals, similar to the earlier Egyptian texts.

"THE HISTORY OF ALCHEMY IS COMPLEX, BLURRING THE LINES BETWEEN CHEMISTRY, ESOTERIC RAMBLINGS AND BIZARRE PHILOSOPHY"

ABOVE This painting by David Ryckaert III presents the clichéd image of the alchemist as an elderly man pouring over forgotten manuscripts



ABOVE Nicolas Flamel may be a name familiar to Harry Potter fans, as this real bookseller had a connection to alchemy

The Islamic Golden Age of 622 to 1258 was also a key period in the development of the alchemical tradition. It was during this time that the word alchemy may have first emerged, with the Arabic 'al' (meaning 'the') being added as a prefix. The word's origins are often disputed, with some believing it comes from the Egyptian word 'khem' meaning 'blackness'. The most prominent Islamic alchemist during this period was Jábir ibn Háyyan, considered the father of Arab chemistry. According to alchemical legend, Jábir was the author of between 300 and a 1,000 manuscripts on alchemy and lived until the ripe old age of 94.

During the medieval period the work of an alchemist known as 'Geber' became increasingly important. For years Geber was incorrectly assumed to be Jábir, his writings circulated under a Latinised name. However, it is now suspected that some of these later works were in fact authored by a Spanish-Arab monk or alchemist located on the peninsula who, as well as translating the work of the original Jábir, also signed his own works under the earlier alchemist's name. According to Principe "the author concealed behind the pseudonym of Geber is probably an Italian Franciscan friar and lecturer named Paul of Taranto," due to the latter having written a work incredibly similar in style and content to that of Geber's.

By the time we reach the medieval period alchemy had begun to fully develop into a pseudoscience with a philosophy all of its own. One of the main philosophies of medieval alchemy was the notion that four elements (earth, fire, air and water) composed all matter. Jábir, or possibly Geber, had added two further elements: sulphur and mercury. It was the Swiss physician Paracelsus who introduced the ▶

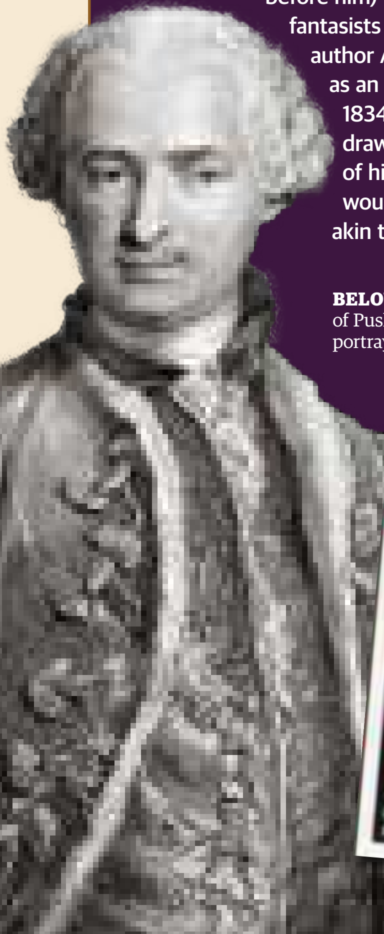
WHO WAS THE COUNT ST GERMAIN?

He claimed to have lived for 500 years and possessed a knowledge of all things

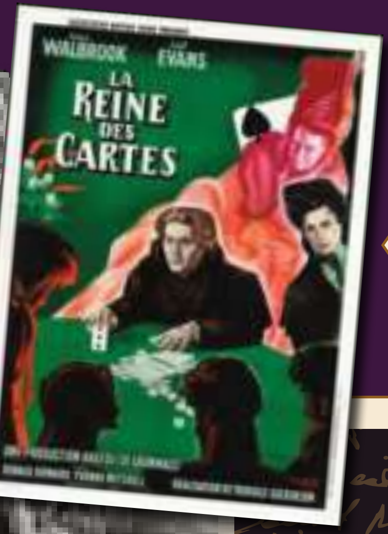
In 18th century France, the mysterious Count of St Germain appeared as if from nowhere, and from 1745-84 wooed the nobility with his skills as an adventurer, philosopher and, of course, alchemist. Who exactly this enigmatic man was remains something of a mystery, and in the centuries since his appearance he has become shrouded in legend and been the subject of numerous folk tales. Of St Germain's early years little is known, perhaps due to the man himself wishing to keep his origins a secret – but he soon developed a mystic air. One of the first sightings of the count was when the author of the gothic thriller The Castle of Otranto, Horace Walpole, mentions him having been arrested for spying in 1745. The count's knowledge of a variety of subjects meant he quickly inspired a certain level of awe. Voltaire purportedly met the count once and described him as "a man who knows everything and who never dies." However, despite this enigmatic reputation he was a very real individual who worked as a diplomat for France.

Despite the count passing away in 1784, his mystical reputation ensured that in the successive centuries he remained a figure of interest for those with a taste for the occult. The esoteric Theosophical movement claimed the Count of St Germain as a legendary spiritual master and key figure to its religion. Many of its members, including CW Leadbeater and Annie Besant, claimed to have met him in the centuries after his death, with a variety of stories claiming that he was over 500 years old.

As his mystical reputation grew, the count (like Flamel before him) became a source on which literary fantasists could draw. Famous Russian author Alexander Pushkin used the count as an enigmatic mystical figure in his 1834 short story *The Queen of Spades*, drawing on the supernatural elements of his legend. The 1949 film adaptation would portray him as a figure of fear, akin to the devil himself.



BELOW Poster for the 1949 film version of Pushkin's *The Queen of Spades*, which portrays the count as a figure of fear



WHO WAS FULCANELLI?

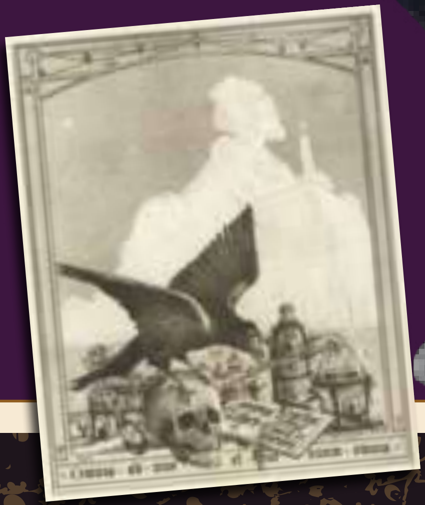
The author who may have found the secrets of eternal youth and turning metal into gold

Fulcanelli is the name used by the French author of two seminal esoteric works: *The Mystery of the Cathedrals* (1926) and *The Dwellings of the Philosophers* (1929). The former is a study of gothic cathedrals, describing the symbology found within them and its link to the tradition of alchemy. Yet one of the attractions of these works is not just the texts themselves, but their enigmatic author. After passing the manuscripts to one of his students, Eugène Canseliet, Fulcanelli himself promptly vanished off the face of the Earth. Who exactly he was still remains a mystery and there is little information as to the identity of this peculiar figure.

Canseliet supposedly achieved the successful transmutation of 100g of lead into solid gold. He claimed to have met Fulcanelli one final time at a Spanish castle in the 1950s, stating that the master alchemist (who by then would have been in his 80s) barely looked a day over 50. It was Canseliet who published his master's works and may possibly have even been Fulcanelli himself, hiding in plain sight. According to Geneviève Dubois in *Fulcanelli and the Alchemical Revival*, one Robert Amadou notes in a series of articles that it was once confided to him by Jacques Bergier that Fulcanelli was Schwaller de Lubicz – a noted Egyptologist and mystic.

There were a variety of alleged sightings and meetings with Fulcanelli in the years following his disappearance but they are hard to verify. In 1937 Bergier, a chemical engineer and co-author of *The Morning of the Magicians*, claimed to have met a man who may have been Fulcanelli and who gave him a warning for the physicist André Helbronner about the use of nuclear weapons. This knowledge supposedly led the intelligence services to commence a hunt for the master magician. It was Bergier and his co-author Louis Pauwels who popularised the mystery of Fulcanelli when their book became a cult classic.

BELOW The evocative frontispiece to *The Mystery of the Cathedrals* (1926)



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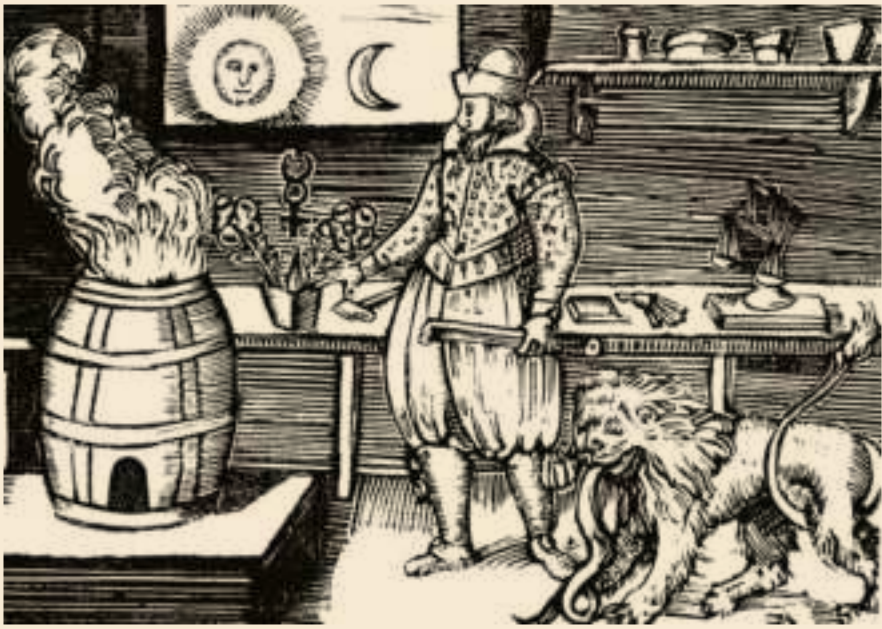
crucial element of 'salt', believing that this, along with sulphur and mercury, were the key three elements from which the earth generated all things. Paracelsus would often explain this theory by burning a piece of wood - the resultant smoke was the result of the sulphur, the smoke of the mercury and the ash was the product of the salt. The Stone of Philosophy also became increasingly important to the work of the medieval alchemist. The process of finding the stone was known as the 'magnum opus', or 'great work', and this was the central goal of the alchemist. The process had four key stages: 'nigredo' (or blackening), 'albedo' (whitening), 'citrinitas' (yellowing) and 'rubedo' (reddening or purpling). As with other aspects of alchemy this developed and changed over time, with noted alchemist and Augustinian canon Sir George Ripley introducing the concept of the 12 gates and Samuel Norton naming at least 14 different stages.

There were many famous alchemists at work during this period. Integral in the translating of many Islamic texts was the Dominican Friar Albertus Magnus (c.1200-80). Like Jábir, Magnus' later recognition meant that a variety of alchemical texts were attributed to him, whether he had actually authored them or not. One of Magnus' students was the noted theologian Thomas Aquinas (1225-74), who would obtain his master's knowledge of alchemy, among other subjects. Another well-known alchemist during this period was Roger Bacon (1220-92), also known by the pseudonym Doctor Mirabilis. A Fransciscan friar, like other alchemists Bacon was similarly interested in the concept of extending his life through magical means. According to the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Bacon gave a recipe for an elixir of life in both his edition of the *Secretum Secretorum* and within the later chapters of his *Epistola de secretis operibus artis et naturae*.

Yet arguably the most infamous alchemist from this period may not have even been one at all. In fact, despite having lived in the 12th and possibly 13th century, he has his mystic origins in the 17th century. Nicolas Flamel is a name now recognised due to his importance to the first Harry Potter novel and film. Like some other figures, such as Fulcanelli or the Count of St Germain, there is much hearsay and mythology surrounding Flamel, though most of this is understood to have been the product of later works. Flamel was a wealthy French scribe and manuscript seller who ran two shops with his wife Perenelle. Flamel, like all mortals, would pass away but, despite the fact that his tombstone can be viewed in the Musée de Cluny, one 17th century work ensured that his greatest legacy would be his reputation as an immortal being and his supposed discovery of the Philosopher's Stone. *Le Livre des Figures Hiéroglyphiques*, or *Exposition of the Hieroglyphical Figures*, was published in French in 1612 and in English in 1624. This book detailed how Flamel, in his work as a bookseller, had purchased a mysterious 21-page volume and later travelled to Spain to seek answers as to the book's origins. Flamel purportedly met a sage who identified the book and in the succeeding years Flamel, along with his wife, was able to translate enough of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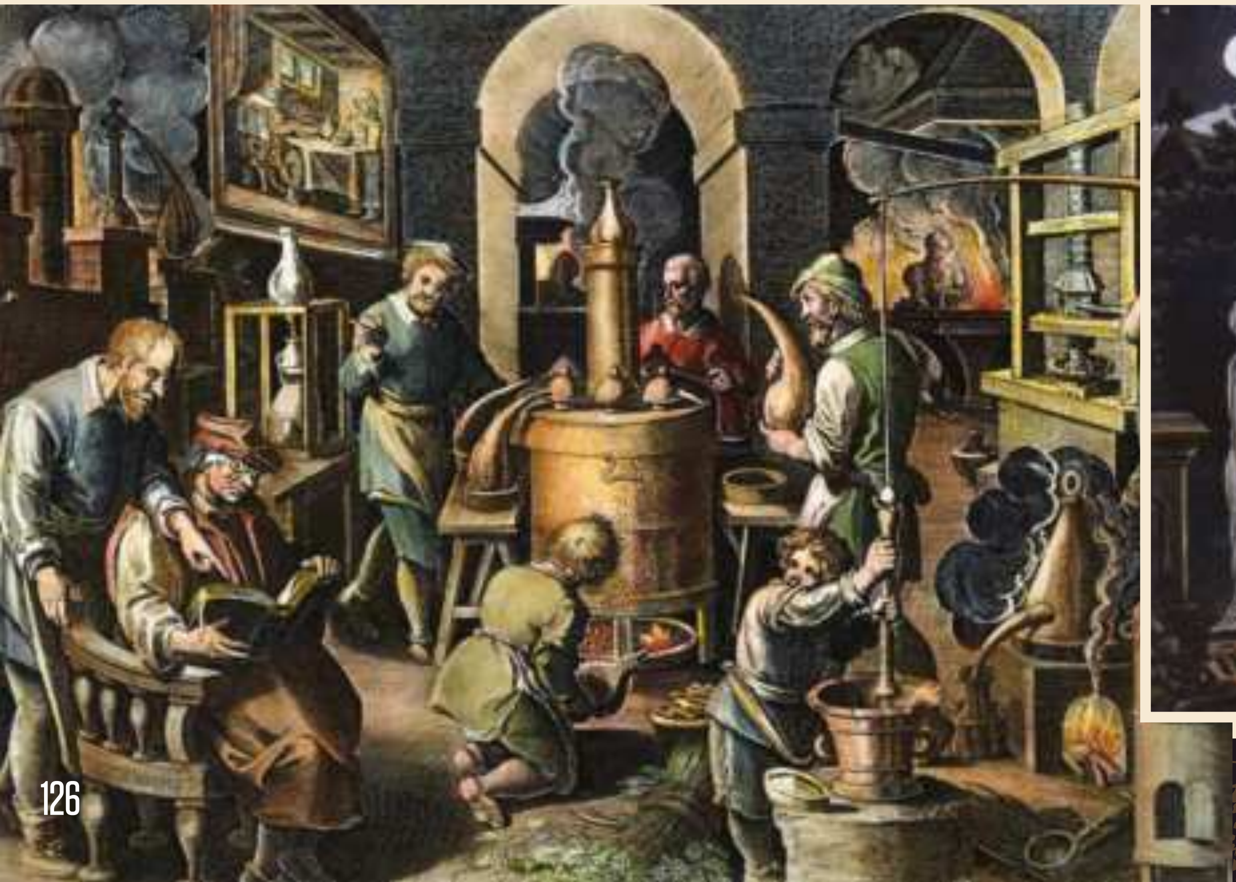
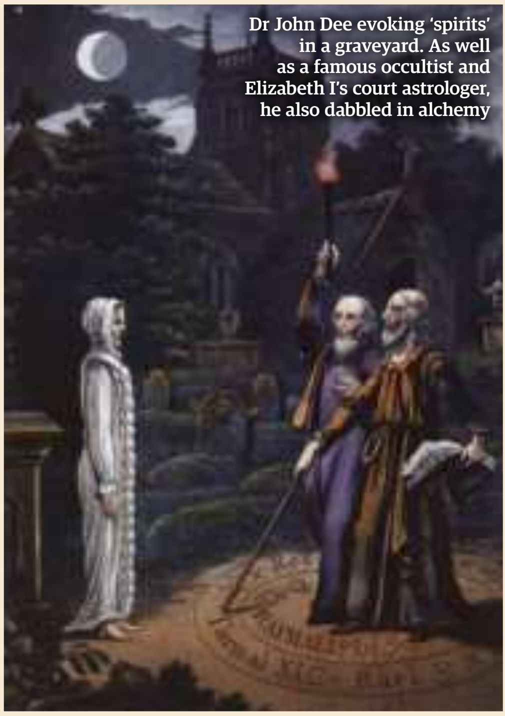
ABOVE This 16th century woodcut from the alchemical text *The Twelve Keys of Basil Valentine*, shows a successful making of the Philosopher's Stone

BELOW A copper engraving of an alchemist's laboratory by Joan Galle after Stradanus




Dr John Dee evoking 'spirits' in a graveyard. As well as a famous occultist and Elizabeth I's court astrologer, he also dabbled in alchemy

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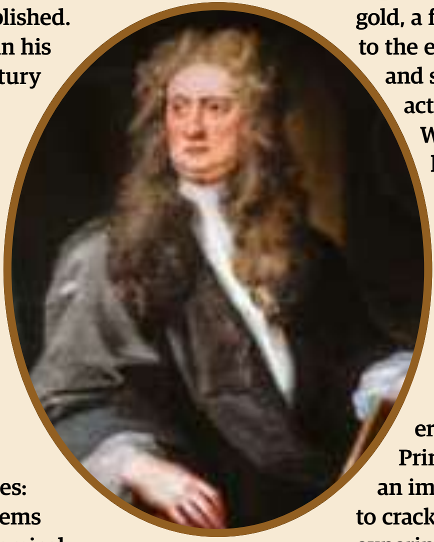
"LEGEND STATES FLAMEL WAS SUCCESSFUL IN HIS QUEST AND THE STONE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS WEALTH AND GRANTED HIM ETERNAL YOUTH"

it in order to decipher the recipe for the Philosopher's Stone. Legend states Flamel was successful in his quest and the stone was responsible for his immense wealth and also granted him eternal youth, leading to stories of him being sighted centuries after his death. Despite numerous criticisms of this fable, Flamel's legend as an alchemist was firmly established. Novelist Victor Hugo referenced Flamel several times in his 1833 novel *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* and 21st century popular culture has seen a renewed interest in him, appearing in horror films such as *As Above So Below* (2014) as well as various media connected to the Harry Potter universe.

In the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries a number of figures who today are remembered as important players in their respective fields were also dabbling in alchemy, such as Dr John Dee (1527 – 1608), who was the court astronomer to Elizabeth I as well as her spymaster. Dee is perhaps most often remembered as an all-round occultist but he was also keenly interested in alchemy, particularly the work of the aforementioned George Ripley. In Jennifer M Rampling's paper *John Dee and the Alchemists*, she notes: "During his travels in Europe during the 1560s, Dee seems to have become acquainted with a wider range of alchemical doctrines, and began to accumulate a substantial library of alchemical literature. These included up to date copies of books by Paracelsus and his followers, and a fine collection of late medieval manuscripts, many retaining Dee's annotations, as detailed in Robert & Watson's important reconstruction of John Dee's library catalogue (1990)." Dee also owned alchemical equipment and several of the outbuildings at his home were used as laboratories. However, after the arrival of the occultist Edward Kelley into his household in 1582, Dee's research began increasingly to veer into the spiritual and more esoteric realms of alchemy. Dee now seemed to be primarily interested in attempting to converse with angels as opposed to discovering the secrets of the Philosopher's Stone. Despite claiming to be a successful alchemist, it has often been suspected that Kelley was a charlatan and confidence trickster who abused Dee's beliefs and trust in him.

Robert Boyle (1627-91), who discovered that a gas will decrease in pressure as the volume of its container is increased, is now seen as one of the first modern chemists. Boyle himself was a committed alchemist who believed in the ability of transmutation, claiming to have witnessed it himself. Isaac Newton (1643-1727), one of the greatest physicists and mathematicians of all time, is not a name one might assume to have dabbled in such esoteric fields as alchemy, but indeed he did. While it had been known for sometime that Newton had undertaken several studies in the occult, Principe drew attention to a recipe Newton had written for a key ingredient to make the fabled Philosopher's Stone. And historian William Newman argues that alchemy was in fact responsible for Newton's thinking concerning white light. "Alchemists were the first to realise that compounds could be broken down into their constituent parts and then recombined. Newton then applied that to white light, which he deconstructed into constituent colours and then recombined," he told *National Geographic*. "That's something Newton got from alchemy."



ABOVE Isaac Newton, the physicist and mathematician who also dabbled in alchemy

BELOW By the 17th century the image of the alchemist had been fully cemented

Alchemy continued to be a subject of interest and study into the successive centuries, despite claims that it underwent something of a demise in the 18th century following its earlier golden age. In the previous centuries the concept had developed that alchemy was solely the work of charlatans and confidence tricksters. However, honest attempts at transmutation still took place. In the mid-1850s one Cyprien Théodore Tiffereau presented a series of papers outlining his experiments in transmuting metal (specifically silver) into gold, a feat he claimed to have mastered. In a similar fashion to the earlier debate concerning the elements of mercury and sulphur, Tiffereau believed that all metals were actually compounds of hydrogen, oxygen and nitrogen. While Tiffereau was invited to present his findings, he unfortunately failed to replicate his experiments. However, in 1899 he once again claimed that he had achieved transmutation and used his recent interest in microbiology to explain his earlier failure. A lack of airborne microorganisms, he explained, bountiful in areas surrounding precious mineral deposits such as where he'd originally conducted his experiments, had resulted in transmutation not taking place.

Today, alchemy is no longer viewed only as a fool's errand or the work of con men. Scientists such as Principe have recontextualised this oft-maligned art as an important piece of the history of chemistry, managing to crack some of the alchemist's codes and recreate their experiments. It was due to the work of Principe and his contemporaries, along with the revelation that key figures such as Newton had been interested in the subject, that alchemy enjoyed a 'revival' among historians of chemistry. Although much of it remains shrouded in mystery, hidden in code or wrapped in esotericism, there was often very real science behind many of their experiments. Turning metal into gold or living forever may be idle fantasies, but many of those who sought them based their experiments in what (for the time) seems to have been some rational thought. And after all, who doesn't occasionally dream of eternal youth and riches?

© Getty Images

WATCH THE SKIES!

From 1947 onwards America found itself in the grip of a flying saucer frenzy – but were these sightings really invaders from Mars?

Written by Callum McKelvie

"Keep looking, keep watching the skies!" Douglas Spencer proclaims during the final moments of the 1951 sci-fi horror film *The Thing From Another World*. From 1947 onwards that's just what America was doing as the nation became gripped by a flying saucer frenzy. The birth of the UFO phenomenon is one of the most intriguing moments in late 1940s and '50s popular culture. During this period some of the most infamous UFO sightings of the 20th century occurred, and places like Roswell became synonymous with visitors from other planets and sinister conspiracies. But as the world entered one of the hottest phases of the Cold War, just why was America obsessed with "watching the skies"?

As far as historians have been able to tell, the beginning of the flying saucer craze can be traced back to events that occurred on 24 June 1947 when businessman and amateur aviator Kenneth Arnold witnessed something strange in the airspace above Mineral, Washington. Arnold was circling in his small private plane around the area surrounding Mount Rainier where a Marine Corps plane was said to have recently crashed. There was a $5,000 reward for anyone who located the wreckage, but Arnold would find something far more eerie in the skies above the mountains. It began when he was startled by a blue flash in the periphery of his vision. The surprised pilot looked around desperately but could see nothing except a DC-4 aircraft roughly 25km away, which couldn't possibly have caused the strange glow. Suddenly, Arnold saw nine bright boomerang-shaped objects flying in "a diagonally [illegible] echelon formation". Upon [illegible] objects were travelling a distance of 80km in the space of one minute and [illegible] seconds, Arnold worked out that they were travelling 2,735kph – more than [illegible]

EXPERT BIOS

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DR DAVID CLARKE

David Clarke is associate professor at Sheffield Hallam University's Centre for Contemporary Legend. He is the author of *How UFOs Conquered the World* (Aurum Press, 2015) and *The UFO Files: The Inside Story of Real-Life Sightings* (Bloomsbury, 2012).

© Cian Hill

CIAN GILL

Gill is a scientist who researches and presents *Wide Atlantic Weird*, a podcast about fringe beliefs. His interests include cryptozoology, Victorian fantasy fiction, and the early years of UFO lore.

speed of sound. At this point it is worth remembering that no jet had yet broken the sound barrier. The next day Arnold gave an interview on the matter to a reporter from the *East Oregonian* – little did he or the journalist realise the effect that his story would have. According to *Smithsonian Magazine*, by the end of 1947 there were almost 300 UFO sightings – the United States was in the grip of a 'flying saucer frenzy'.

But if Arnold said he saw 'boomerang shapes' then why did UFOs come to be known as 'flying saucers'? "When he landed and described what he had seen, he was still talking about crescent shapes," says Dr David Clarke, UFO expert and associate professor at Sheffield Hallam University's Centre for Contemporary Legend. The crucial mistake that Arnold made was in the phrase he used to describe the movement of the objects he saw. Cian Gill, host of *Wide Atlantic Weird*, a podcast about unexplained phenomena, says: "When Arnold described the craft to the press he used this very strange turn of phrase and said that they moved 'like a saucer if you skip it across the water'." However, despite Arnold describing only the movement of the objects as 'like a saucer', the key phrase had been used and was about to redefine the popular image of the 'alien spacecraft' forever.

"The sub editor (or whoever it was, no one's actually been able to name them) put 'flying saucers' and that was syndicated right across North America," explains Clarke. "So virtually every newspaper carried the story and that quickly spread to the European papers and even as far as Australia." The term 'flying saucer' seems to have tapped into something in the public consciousness. "In the years that followed, you've got people reporting having seen 'flying saucers'. How did that come about?" Clarke muses. "Clearly, a lot of them did actually see things in the sky. Later, the US Air Force [USAF] collected peoples' descriptions of these things and found that there was no consensus of what people were seeing yet. Some people did see saucers, but others saw rocket- or pyramid-

FATE

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VOLUME 1 NUMBER 1

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE FLYING SAUCERS
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MARK TWAIN AND HALLEY'S COMET
By HAROLD M. SHERMAN

INVISIBLE BEINGS WALK THE EARTH
By R. J. CRESCENZI

TWENTY MILLION MANIACS
By G. H. IRWIN

Many Other Startling Articles And Features

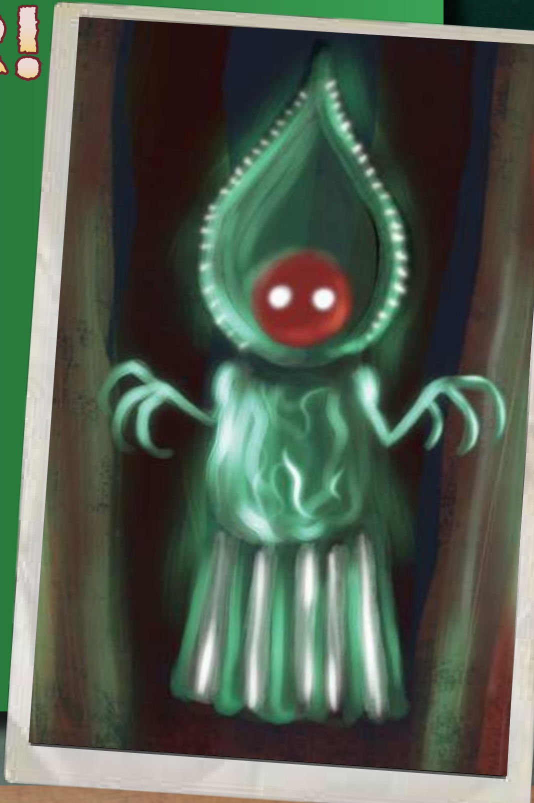
Of all the noted UFO sightings of the 1950s, one still sends a shiver down the spine…

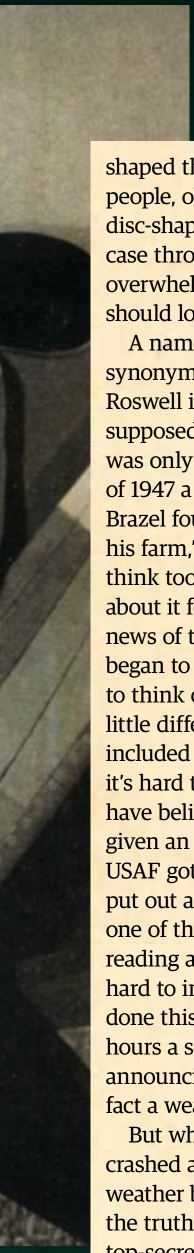
THE FLATWOODS MONSTER!

Flatwoods is a small town in Braxton County in the hills of West Virginia. At 7.15pm on 12 September 1952, events occurred there that meant, ever since, Flatwoods has been associated with a terrifying apparition. Three teenage boys were playing in their schoolyard when they saw something red and fiery fly across the sky, appearing to crash at a local farm. One of the boys fetched his mother, Mrs May, and the group made its way to the farm. Approaching the site through the woods the group saw something that would haunt them forever.

The creature was described by the 17-year-old Gene Lemon as a "10ft monster with a blood-red body and a green face that seemed to glow". Two vast beams of light appeared to project outward from its eyes and scour the dense mist. As the light from Lemon's torch hit the creature, they were able to see it clearer. The monster was described as having a green body, and Mrs May said it had drape-like folds. (Some of the boys present disputed this, instead describing the creature as dark in colour.) Its face was round and red, with a hood-like shape surrounding it. The monster was seen for only the briefest moment before it let out a terrifying hiss and glided menacingly towards the group. In sheer terror, the boys and Mrs May fled through the trees.

A number of explanations have been given over the years for what the group saw. A meteor did pass over the village and was seen by numerous people, explaining the bright light in the sky. Ufologist Major Donald Keyhoe claimed that the US Air Force had sent two investigators who determined that the meteor had "merely appeared to be landing when it disappeared over the hill". But what of the monster? According to Keyhoe, the investigators concluded that the creature was "probably a large owl perched on a limb". Various other accounts and the work of sceptic Joe Nickell would seem to corroborate this, but the legend of the Flatwoods Monster lives on and today the little town remains a popular tourist attraction.

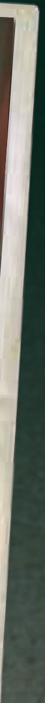




shaped things. But for the majority of people, objects from outer space were disc-shaped and that remained the case through the 1950s. That was the overwhelming idea of what a spacecraft should look like."

A name that has become synonymous with UFO conspiracies is Roswell in New Mexico. However, the supposed 'incident' there at the time was only a flash in the pan. "In July of 1947 a rancher by the name of Mac Brazel found some debris strewn across his farm," Gill explains. "He didn't think too much of it and indeed forgot about it for several weeks." However, as news of the recent saucer phenomenon began to reach Brazel's ears, he started to think of his mysterious find a little differently. Given the 'wreckage' included tinfoil and pieces of rubber, it's hard to fathom how anyone could have believed him but the story was given an extra lease of life when the USAF got involved. "They immediately put out a statement saying 'yes, this is one of those flying saucers we've been reading about'," Gill says. "It's kind of hard to imagine why they would have done this." Whatever the reason, within hours a second statement was released announcing that Brazel's find was in fact a weather balloon.

But what was it that had *actually* crashed at Roswell? Calling it a downed weather balloon was not too far from the truth. The wreckage was part of top-secret project, Mogul, described by James Michael Young in a 2020 issue of *Airpower History* as seeking to "develop a technique capable of recording the sound of a nuclear detonation deep within the Soviet Union. The idea was to place acoustic sensors (ie quasi microphones) on balloons that operated at a steady state within the stratosphere". Over 100 balloons were launched between 1947 and 1950. Despite the majority of information concerning Mogul now being declassified, this has not ended speculation about the Roswell incident. The modern version of the story was first developed in a 1980 book by Charles Berlitz and William Moore. "This is when other elements get added to the story," Gill explains. "People start saying wreckage and alien bodies were found and that they were taken somewhere to a secret base – it spirals out from there."



But Roswell was not alone in its tale of a crashed alien spacecraft somewhere in the southwest desert. "There were a couple of other crashed saucer cases that were outed as being rather ridiculous scams," says Gill. "For example, in 1949 there was the Aztec New Mexico case." This scam involved two confidence tricksters, Silas M Newton and Leo A Gebauer, who attempted to sell 'alien technology' from a supposed crash site. The device created from this 'alien tech' was the inventively named 'Magnetic Doodlebug'. "They were these fake machines pretending to show you how to search for gold in the desert," says Gill. However ludicrous the prospect, industrialist Herman A Flader was convinced to invest some $34,000 in the project, according to a contemporary *Time* magazine article. A popular book by Frank Scully, *Behind the Flying Saucers*, also helped put Newton and Gebauer's scam in the limelight, promoting much of their evidence as real. "Some folks believe that like Roswell it would have been tarred with this brush and that might have been part of the reason it left the pop culture consciousness relatively quickly," Gill concludes.

A year preceding this event the UFO craze became disturbingly real when 25-year-old USAF Captain Thomas F Mantell was killed chasing a UFO in the skies above Kentucky. According to Carl L Devito in his book *Space, Life, Science and Stories*, on 7 January 1948 a "silvery and spherical" object was seen in the sky by numerous witnesses, both military and civilian. Four USAF aircraft returning from a routine training mission received a call from Godman Army Airfield to investigate. The leader of the group, the aforementioned Mantell, was not equipped with the oxygen necessary to travel higher than 12,000 feet. Soon alone and pursuing the strange object, Mantell reported seeing it directly in front of him before it all went horribly wrong. "Mantell stops talking," Gill says. "There's three minutes of radio silence and then he's gone. They find the plane crashed and his watch had shattered at three minutes after

▶

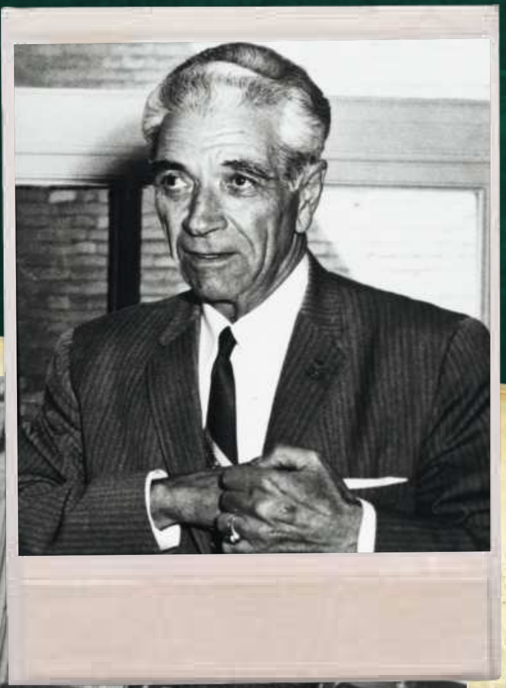
LEFT Kenneth Arnold, whose 1947 UFO encounter triggered a flying saucer frenzy

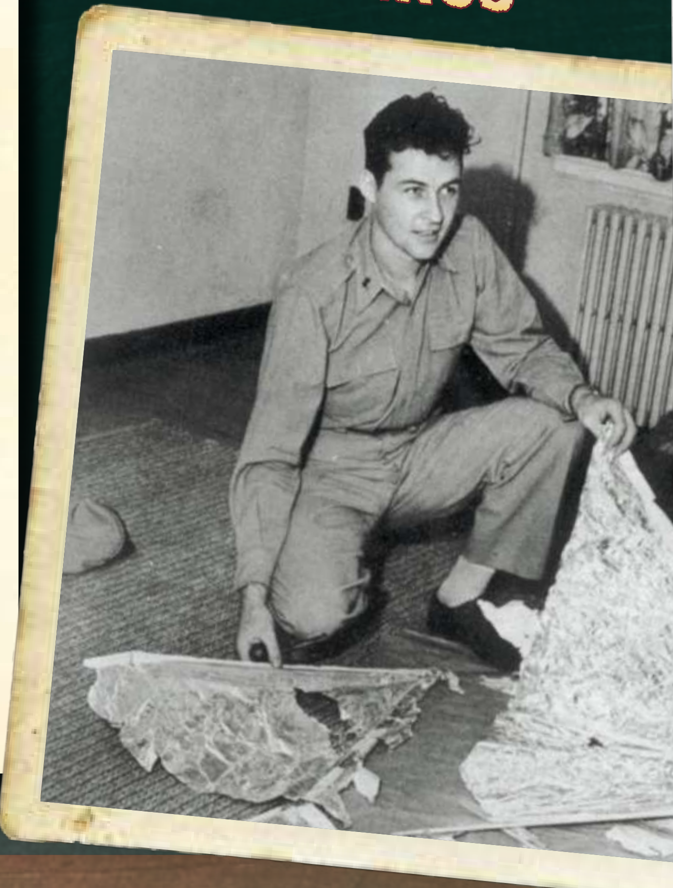
LEFT-INSET A 1948 copy of *Fate* magazine with an illustration of Arnold's encounter on the cover

BELOW-RIGHT George Adamski, who claimed to have not only met aliens but been taken on journeys around the solar system

BOTTOM Irving Newton with the wreckage of the supposed flying saucer found by rancher Mac Brazel in Roswell, New Mexico

BY THE END OF 1947 THERE WERE ALMOST 300 UFO SIGHTINGS





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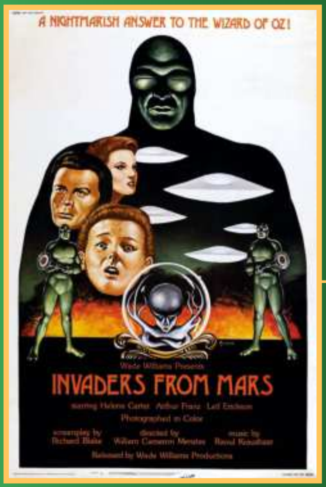
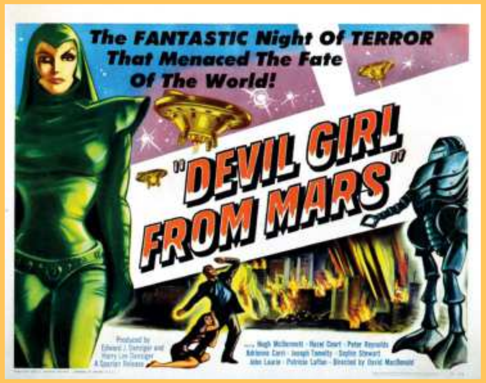
SAUCERS ON THE SCREEN

As UFO-mania gripped the West, filmmakers got in on the act: here are six of the best and downright peculiar 50s sci-fi flicks!


A NIGHTMARISH ANSWER TO THE WIZARD OF OZ!
INVADERS FROM MARS

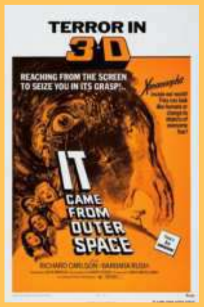
Invaders from Mars (1953)

A haunting, dreamlike film, *Invaders From Mars* follows a young boy who witnesses a spacecraft land in a local sandpit. When his parents investigate they become taken over by a malevolent alien force. A film more interested in exploring a child's nightmares than an extra-terrestrial attack, it quickly developed a cult reputation.


The FANTASTIC Night Of TERROR That Menaced The Fate Of The World!
"DEVIL GIRL FROM MARS"

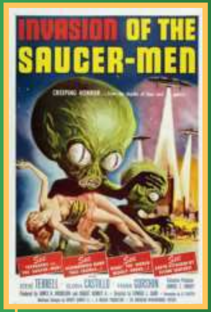
It Came From Outer Space (1953)

The first movie released by Universal in 3D, this thought-provoking sci-fi film was based on a story by Ray Bradbury. It follows a schoolteacher who witnesses a meteorite-like object land in the desert surrounding a small Arizona town. As strange things begin to happen, tension brews between the townsfolk and whatever is at large in the desert.


TERROR IN 3D
REACHING FROM THE SCREEN TO SEIZE YOU IN ITS GRASP!
IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE

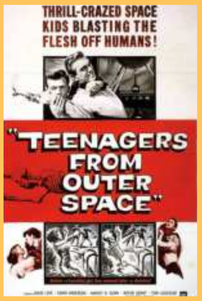
Devil Girl from Mars (1954)

A campy classic, the titular 'devil girl' is Nyah, who (clad in provocative black leather) wants to kidnap the male population of Earth so they can mate with the all-female population of Mars. Being a British film, the action takes place almost entirely in and around a local pub.



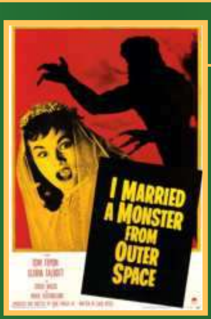
Teenagers from Outer Space (1959)

This romp tapped into the flying saucer craze and the new obsession with juvenile delinquency that led to a boom of B-movies aimed at teenagers. A group of aliens land their saucer on Earth, with one young invader falling in with the local teens.


THRILL-CRAZED SPACE KIDS BLASTING THE FLESH OFF HUMANS!
"TEENAGERS FROM OUTER SPACE"

Invasion of the Saucer-Men (1957)

This quirky little B-movie is best remembered for its alien designs, with oversized heads and huge bulging eyes. With its tongue placed firmly in its cheek, it follows a group of teenagers who repel an alien attack on their town.


I MARRIED A MONSTER FROM OUTER SPACE

I Married a Monster From Outer Space (1958)

Nowhere near as ludicrous as its title suggests, this film follows Marge, a newlywed who comes to believe that her husband, Bill, is not quite the man he was when she met him. Of course Bill, along with the other men in the town, is revealed to be an alien in a thought-provoking film that continues to be a cult favourite among sci-fi fans.

6x © Alamy

Members of the US Air force at a news conference to discuss a project to capture visual data on UFOs using 200 cameras

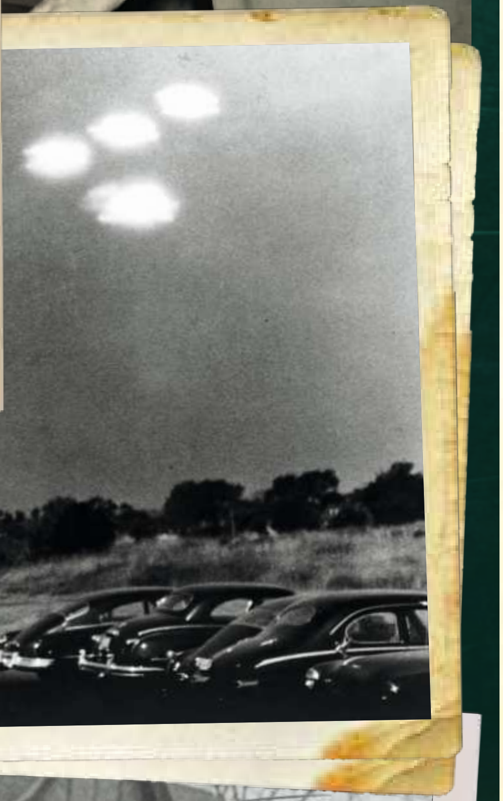
they last had contact." During his last radio contact Mantell had informed the control tower that he was already at 15,000 feet and still climbing in an attempt to get a closer look at the object. "The standard explanation is that whatever he was chasing went up past 15,000 feet, he didn't have any oxygen, and he passed out and crashed," continues Gill. "However, rumours started due to the mysterious nature of the object he was chasing. One rumour was that it was some kind of Soviet missile – which given the Cold War context is a fairly natural explanation for the time."

By this point the mysterious objects were beginning to have very real security implications. Project Blue Book was an operation undertaken by the USAF to study the increasing number of UFO reports. Active between 1952 and 1969, it built on earlier USAF projects such as Project Sign and Project Grudge. Blue Book hired astronomer Josef Allen Hynek as supervisor. "They wanted a scientist, someone who wasn't military and who would have a dispassionate attitude," Gill explains. "He's a superstar, he's one of the biggest names in UFO culture." Some 12,618 sightings were reported to Project Blue book, and 701 remained unexplained at the time of its closure. "The man in charge was a captain called Ed Roper," Clarke explains. "He was the person who effectively coined the acronym UFO. From the point of view of the

ABOVE-INSET This 'saucer' was supposedly found at West Orange quarry

ABOVE A 1952 photograph showing a cluster of four bright objects in the sky over Salem, Massachusetts

RIGHT The sci-fi obsession of 1950's America spread across all age groups



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THE STAFF AT ANDREWS NOTICED THE STRANGE OBJECTS HEADING FOR THE WHITE HOUSE

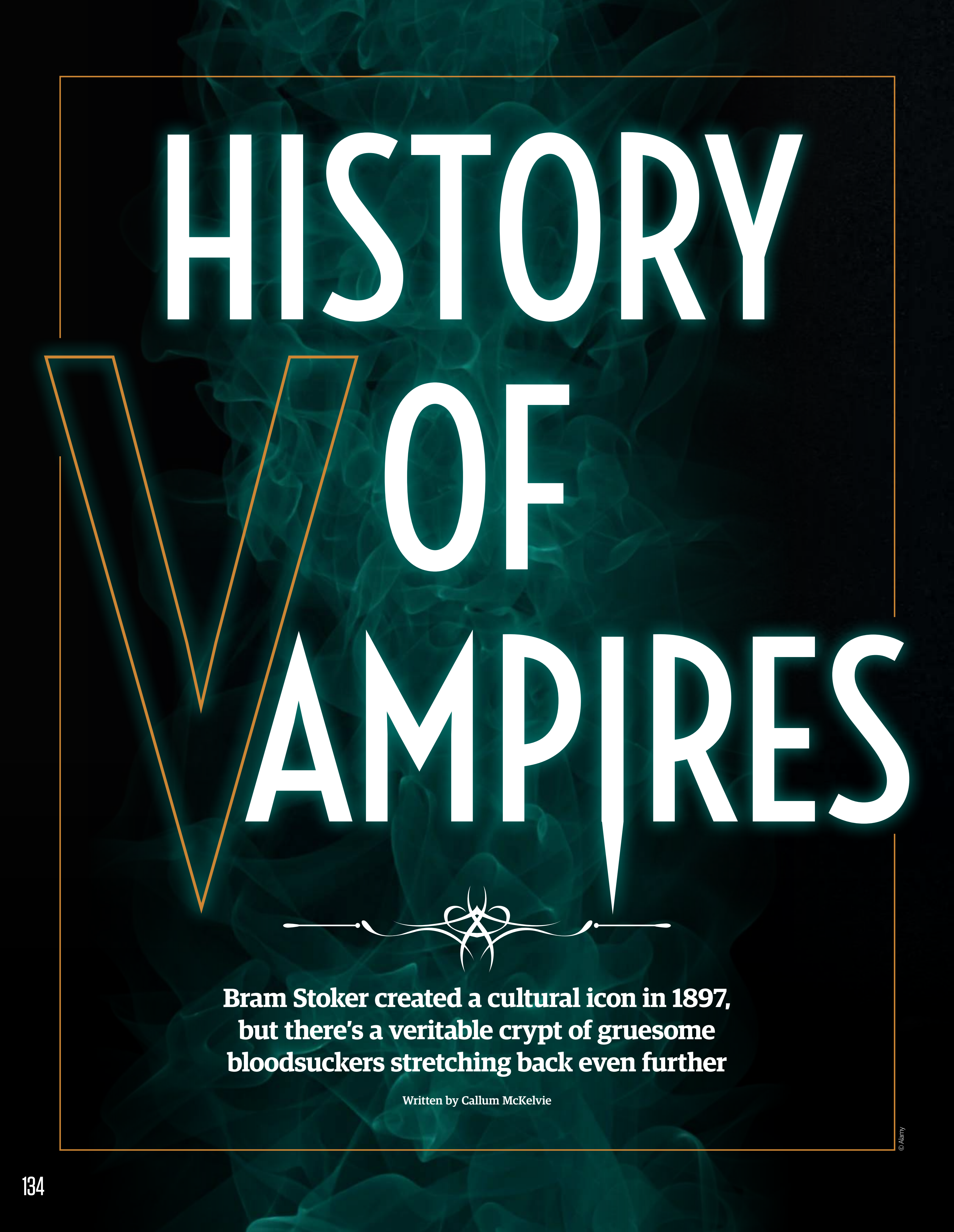
USAF they didn't have any evidence that these things were extraterrestrial. If they saw something on radar that couldn't be identified, they needed to make sure it wasn't a Russian aircraft or missile. They came up with UFOs to try and get away from the term 'flying saucer'." But it wasn't that easy for Roper to dissociate the public obsession with flying saucers from the objects suspected to be flying over the USA. "What we see is that the phrase 'flying saucer' starts being used less and less, and effectively now UFO means the same as flying saucer," says Clarke.

Despite the investigative efforts of Blue Book, it was shortly before midnight on the night of 19 July 1952 that one of the most sensationalist and bizarre UFO reports of the 1950s occurred. Simultaneously air traffic control at Washington National Airport and Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland noticed a cluster of seven blips, which began moving slowly but soon sped up. At air traffic control, two of the operators looked out of the window and saw a bright light moving across the sky. "Look at that," one said. "If you believe in flying saucers, that could sure be one." Panicked staff at Andrews noticed the strange objects were heading for the capital and the White House, and two F-94 jets were immediately scrambled. Yet as soon as they came close to intercepting the mysterious objects, they simply vanished. "It was these sightings that got Winston Churchill interested," says Clarke. "He fired off a famous memo saying: 'What's all this stuff about flying saucers? Tell me the truth'."

By this point the UFO frenzy was already in full swing. Pulp magazines were brimming with sci-fi flying saucer stories, and the 1951 film *The Day the Earth Stood Still* depicted a flying saucer landing in Washington – preempting the 1952 sightings. However, that movie also highlights another curious aspect of the UFO craze. "In this film you've got the idea that because mankind was in danger of destroying ourselves in a nuclear war that if aliens exist they must care about us," explains Clarke. "They'd be coming here to try and stop this war." In 1953, Polish-born George Adamski collaborated with author Desmond Leslie on the book *Flying Saucers Have Landed*, which details a number of 'true' encounters Adamski had with a visitor from Venus. "It was Nordic-looking, tall, blond, wearing a classic 1950s ski suit," Clarke explains. "It was benevolent, it wanted to save us from destruction. Adamski later went on trips around the solar system to Venus, Mars, Saturn – all the places that we know there is no intelligent life." Nonetheless, Adamski's book was popular and began the 'contactees' movement. "There was a slew of books during the 1950s from people like Adamski who claimed they'd met aliens who were here to help us escape nuclear destruction," says Clarke. "The intelligence services were interested in these people because they often described being taken to a sort of socialist paradise and they thought they were spreading Soviet propaganda."

The remainder of the 1950s was defined by America's obsession with UFOs. There are numerous other sightings this article could have covered, and we've only scratched the surface of this unique period. But the question that remains to be answered is why in 1947 did Americans start watching the skies? "I'm very influenced by the psycho-social hypothesis, a lot of which is associated with a very good British UFO magazine called *Magonia*," says Gill. "We'd just had a war where for the first time we'd had a great deal of air combat. It was very clear that airpower was the future of warfare. You also had people like Ray Palmer who in the 1930s wrote sci-fi and in the 1950s and 1960s was writing 'true' sci-fi stories. It makes total sense that flying saucers came along at this time."

Perhaps, then, the UFO sensation is ultimately a uniquely Cold War phenomenon. "The whole UFO myth emerged from the Cold War," Clarke concludes. "Although there was this general belief in pulp fiction prior to this, they didn't take the form that they did – extraterrestrial visitors in flying disc-shaped objects – until the Cold War. It's a combination of things: the spectre of nuclear war, government secrecy, and people's fears of technology." ○



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HISTORY OF VAMPIRES

Bram Stoker created a cultural icon in 1897, but there's a veritable crypt of gruesome bloodsuckers stretching back even further

Written by Callum McKelvie

'THE BLOOD IS LIFE... AND IT SHALL BE MINE!'

BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA

EXPERT BIO

© Chris Chapman

PROFESSOR NICK GROOM

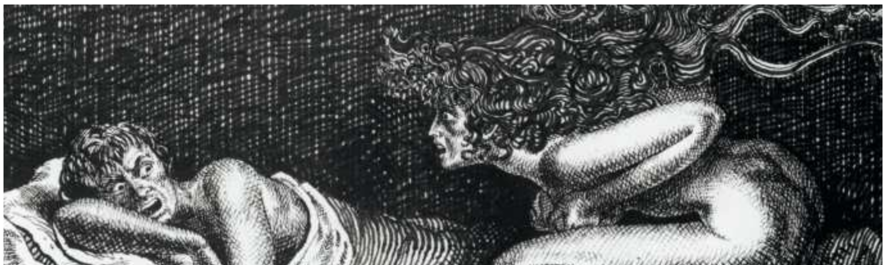
Nick Groom is Professor of Literature in English at the University of Macau, having previously been Professor in English at the University of Exeter. He specialises in Gothic literature and is the author of *The Vampire: A New History*

The long cape and evening wear, the distinguished features and thick Romanian accent, the fangs and the blood – if you say 'vampire' to someone then doubtless these are some of the images the word conjures. From Bela Lugosi's accent to Christopher Lee's crimson-lined cape, they can mostly be traced to a single source – Bram Stoker's 1897 novel, *Dracula*. But Stoker's story of a Transylvanian count who travels to the British seaside town of Whitby in search of new blood was not the only work concerning vampirism published that year – Florence Marryat also authored *Blood of the Vampire*. For some reason, however, Stoker's story captured the public imagination in a way Marryat's never did. Since then, it's Stoker's novel and its subsequent adaptations that have become the archetype for vampire stories. According to Stoker's son, Irving Noel Thornley Stoker, his father said the idea for the novel came to him in a horrifying nightmare, the result of "a too generous helping of dressed crab at supper". Whatever the initial conception, it ▶

was an idea that obsessed the Irish writer. Ever since the book's release a variety of historical, folkloric and fictional sources have been named as 'inspiring' the creation of Stoker's vampire. From real historical figures such as Vlad the Impaler and Elizabeth Bathory, to 'authenticated' reports of Romanian vampires in the 18th century, the history of the vampire is a veritable catacomb of stories and legends.

For many centuries, the concept of the creatures that we know today simply did not exist. Of course, images of blood-sucking demons have been with us since Biblical times, with examples found on Chaldean and Assyrian tablets. Lilith is thought to be descended from a class of Mesopotamian demons known as lilû that roughly translates to 'night creature' or 'night monster'. As described by Siegmund Hurwitz in his book: *Lilith - The First Eve*, she, "attempts to destroy the newborn child, the new consciousness or young-life, by drinking its blood." Hurwitz then goes on to state: "This sharply reveals the whole, dangerous vampire nature of Lilith, who needs the child's life to live herself to such an extreme that Lilith, as a later legendary story tells, even murders her own children if she cannot find someone else's to kill." In Jewish folklore there were also the Estries, female vampires that were said to prefer men as their prey. Numerous other ancient cultures have blood-drinking creatures among their mythologies, some of which can be described as precursors to the vampire, but none really match the creature as defined by Stoker.

When tracing the vampire's bloodline we must start with the individual most commonly referred to as 'the real Dracula': Vlad the Impaler. The 15th century Prince of Wallachia is often mistaken as a key inspiration behind Stoker's vampire, primarily due to the shared name of both the fictional creation and the real Translyvanian ruler. Vlad would sign his name as Dracula on several letters, which meant 'Son of the Dragon', in reference to his father, Vlad II Dracul, who was a member of the Order of the Dragon – an organisation created by Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund to defend Christian Europe against the Ottoman Empire. Born in 1431, Vlad Dracula spent much of his youth in the Ottoman Empire as collateral to ensure his father supported Ottoman policies. Upon his return he fought to regain his father's seat, which he would do successfully in 1456, after a brief two-month rule in 1448. It was at this point that he gained his nickname 'the Impaler' due to his penchant for skewering his enemies and leaving fields littered with their bodies as a warning to others. Later film versions of Stoker's novel, most notably Francis Ford Coppola's 1992 adaptation, state clearly that Count Dracula and Vlad the Impaler are one and the same, so tied has the real historical figure become to the fictional character. How much Stoker would have actually known about the real Vlad is often debated. We know from his own notes that Stoker discovered the name 'Dracula' in the summer of 1890 after borrowing *The Accounts of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia* from Whitby's public library. We also know that his attraction to this name was due to books stating that in the Wallachian language, Dracula meant 'Devil'. While some persist in drawing links between the fictional Count and the real Impaler, literary scholars such as Elizabeth Miller continue to point out the fallacies in this argument.



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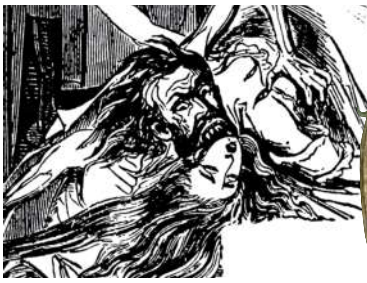
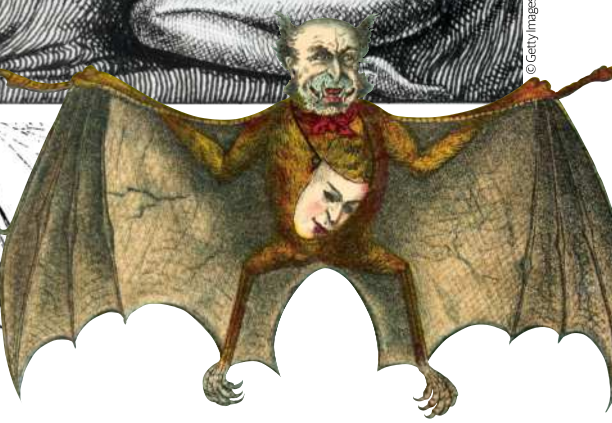




© Getty Images

TOP There are many myths about life-force draining demons, like succubi

ABOVE-LEFT An image from Victorian horror story, *Varney The Vampire*

ABOVE-RIGHT A Vampyre from 1851's *The Comic Natural History of the Human Race*

Another historical figure often linked to the development of Stoker's vampire is the Countess Elizabeth Bathory. Born in 1560, it is hard to determine what is fact and what is fiction when examining the life of the so-called 'blood countess'. Highly educated (she was fluent in four languages), Bathory was from an extremely wealthy family who ruled Renaissance-era Hungary with an iron fist. Bathory became infamous due to stories suggesting that she had killed various young female servants in her employ and either bathed in or drank their blood. At the time she was charged with the murder of some 80 victims, though later legends claim a death toll as high as 650. More recently research has surfaced, notably that of Tony Thorne, which suggests that while Bathory almost certainly was responsible for the deaths of young girls in her care, many of the accusations may have been exaggerated as part of a conspiracy to unseat her. Over the years, Bathory's connection to vampire mythology has grown, becoming the subject of a 1971 Hammer Horror film, *Countess Dracula*, where Ingrid Pitt is shown bathing naked in pools of blood. Perhaps the best screen version, though undoubtedly the most bizarre, is 1971's *Daughters of Darkness* where, according to author James Craig Holte, Bathory, "has survived three hundred

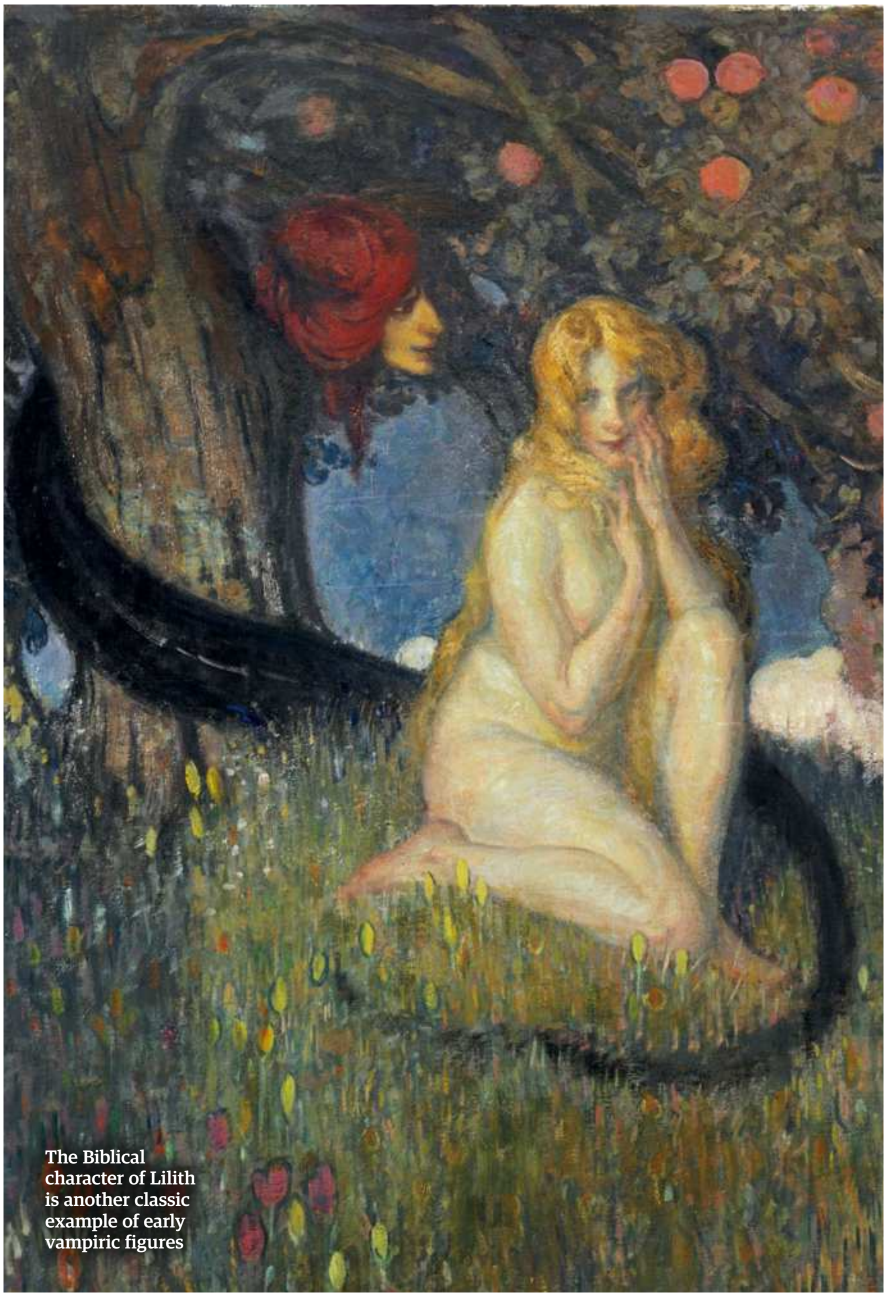
> "HE REPORTEDLY STRANGLED NINE PEOPLE IN EIGHT DAYS IN A SERBIAN VILLAGE, THEN SUCKED THEIR BLOOD"

LEFT Bela Lugosi (in classic Dracula garb) with Helen Chandler in 1931's *Dracula*

years as a vampire," and preys on a pair of newlyweds at an out-of-season hotel in Ostend. Despite Bathory's connection to the vampire myth, it's largely acknowledged that any stories of her drinking and/or bathing in blood are most likely false and were concocted long after her death. And as Miller points out, while Stoker did borrow a book containing a small section on the Blood Countess, "nothing is noted from these pages. And there is nothing in the novel that can be attributed to the short Bathory section." As such, it's likely that it was in the decades following Stoker's novel that Bathory began to develop a reputation as a vampiric fiend.

Much of the mythology that we now link to vampires has remained undefined and loose, with no real connection to the creatures we know today. In the 18th century, however, all this changed. "I think you can actually put a very specific date on the first appearance of the vampire, and that's 1725," explains Nick Groom, Professor of Literature in English at the University of Macau. "There is a report made by an official of the Habsburg Empire, a man called Frombald, a medical officer in the Imperial Army, and he reports that Serbian hajduks (guerilla fighters) are exhuming and staking a corpse. The reason given is that the corpse is said to have risen from the grave to strangle victims, and then infect them with a particular condition that caused them to die within 24 hours." Following Frombald's initial report an investigation was launched, during which the supposed vampire was named as Peter Plogojowitz. "He has reportedly strangled nine people in eight days in a Serbian village, and then sucked their blood," Groom tells us. "The body is exhumed in the presence of local officials and according to the report there are no signs of decay, but there is fresh blood in the mouth. They staked him and blood spurts from his body - all this supposedly occurring after 10 weeks of being in the grave."

The Plogojowitz case was not alone, however, and soon other cases began to occur throughout the Habsburg Empire. "There's another case in 1727," Groom says. "Then in 1730, and then there's a second outbreak of the 1727 case in 1731." This second outbreak was investigated by Dr Johannes Flückinger in a village in Medveda, Serbia, in the area surrounding the Carpathian Mountains, and a total of 13 people were named as vampires. The plague was supposedly started in 1727 by Arnond Paole who, according to Flückinger's report: "Attacked not only the people but also the cattle, and sucked out their blood." Finally exhuming Paole, "they drove a stake through his heart according to their custom whereupon he let out a noticeable groan and



The Biblical character of Lilith is another classic example of early vampiric figures

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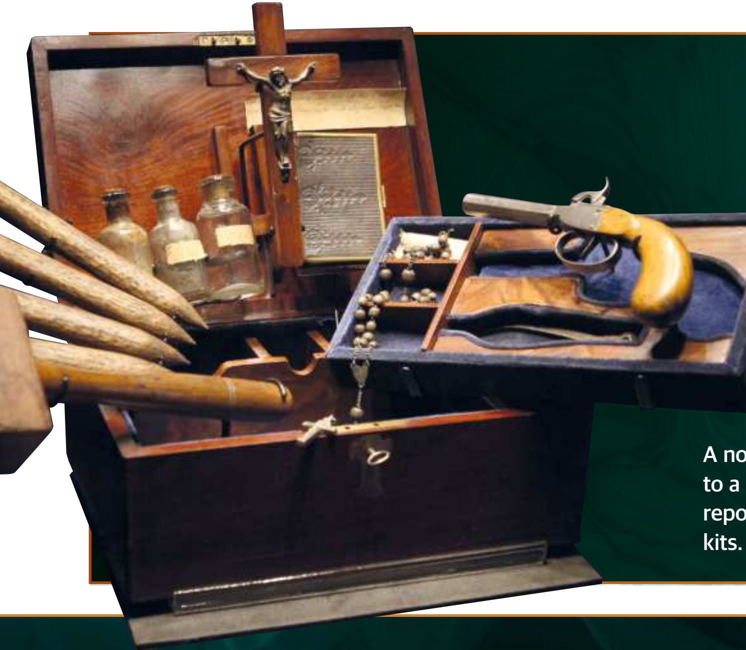


VAMPIRE HUNTING KITS

These strange collectors' curios are said to be from the 19th century and fetch thousands at auction

These vampire hunting kits first came to light in 1986 when one particular example was offered for sale in the United States. Supposedly dating from the 19th century, the kit contained a pocket pistol, a combined cross and stake, and two silver bullets. A note provided with the item was attributed to a Professor Ernst Blomberg, who was reportedly also the maker of several other kits. Reports of the price of these kits varies, but one purportedly sold for around £9,000. While there never seemed much likelihood that the kits were for actual use against real 'vampires', opinion was divided on whether they were handsomely produced curios for Victorian travellers to Eastern Europe, or fakes. Jonathan Ferguson, keeper of firearms and artillery at the Royal Armouries (which owns a kit of its own) believes that the kits, "could not have existed until the era of Hammer horror films in the 1950s-1970s."

GLOBAL GHOULS

Vampiric creatures exist the world over – here are some of the more intriguing and unusual examples

JIANGSHI

The Chinese hopping vampire

Similar to the Western concept of the zombie, the Jiangshi is seen wearing the clothing of the Qing Dynasty. Jiangshi are said to be created by a soul that is unable to leave a person's body because of suicide or a lust for vengeance. This creature's most notorious trait is its penchant for 'hopping'. This is supposedly due to corpses being transported by taoist priests who would tie the bodies to flexible bamboo rods, making it appear as if they were hopping.

ASWANG MANDURUGO

Filipino shape-shifter

Appearing as a beautiful woman, the true form of this monster is a winged bat-like creature. They attempt to find a blood supply through marriage, placing its barbed tongue in their husband's mouth as they sleep, draining the blood. In the Philippines, the word 'Aswang' roughly translates to 'dog' and is applied to anything of a vampiric nature. There are numerous types of Aswang alongside the Mandrugo, for example the Aswang Manananggal.

DIP

The Catalonian hell hound

This particular Catalonian cryptid takes the form of a huge black dog, similar to East Anglia's Black Shuck. But unlike that ghostly apparition, Dip is wholly corporeal and feasts on the blood of its victims. The creature is said to be an emissary of the devil and preys on those walking late at night. Dip's one weakness is that he's lame in one leg. The legend originates from the town of Pratdip, near Tarragona, where the dog can even be seen in its coat of arms.

PISACHA

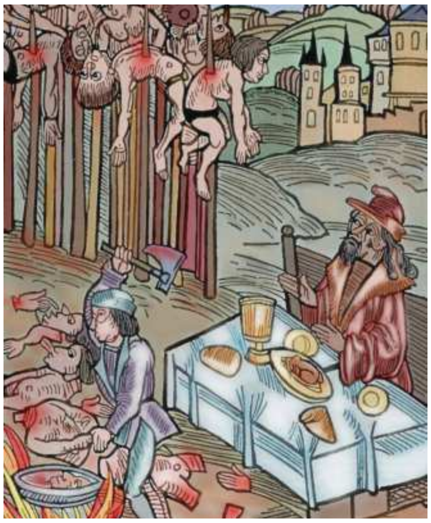
Bloodthirsty Indian vampire

This Indian vampire is believed to be created through vice or by the god Brahma. Dwelling in charnel grounds or at crossroads, these creatures feast on blood and are known to prefer the darkness. The Pisacha's own blood is poisonous and it is frequently portrayed as raping drunken women. Should an individual fall prey to a Pisacha, they may be able to cure themselves of the creature's curse by placing an offering of rice to the Pisacha at a crossroads.

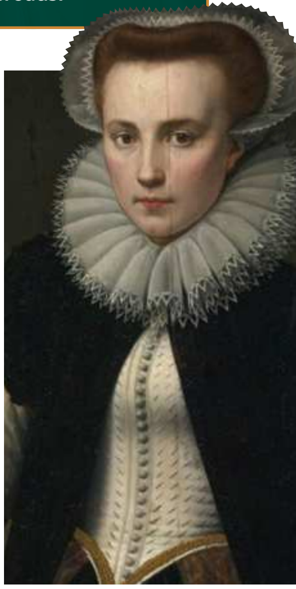
bled copiously." Flückinger's report would be the most widely circulated of these outbreaks, leading to something of a vampire obsession in the Enlightenment period in Europe. The importance of these accounts to the developing vampire myth cannot be understated, particularly Frombald's report in 1725. "That's when the word vampire was first used," Groom explains. "And therefore it's important to date from that specific instance, rather than a more general sense of belief in supernatural bloodsuckers."

The following decades saw something of an Enlightenment obsession with vampirism, particular among academic circles. As historian G David Keyworth explains in his paper *Was the Vampire of the Eighteenth Century a Unique Type of Undead Corpse?*: "The vampire outbreaks inspired many learned dissertations on the topic." Groom explains further: "In 1732 a Viennese medical journal published 17 articles on the subject and that news was then carried across to Europe, to places like Berlin, Paris and London, when the word vampire first entered the English language." One of the major books published during this obsession was by Dom Augustin Calmet, titled: *Treatise on the Apparitions of Spirits and on Vampires or Revenants of Hungary, Moravia, et al* which was then reprinted in 1850 under the more digestible title of *The Phantom World*. The intention was to explain vampire stories within a Catholic view. The book was a major success and widely read, and as the academic Marie-Hélène Huet explained: "Calmet's book belonged to an already flourishing genre that, under the pretence of putting superstitions to rest, indulged in bloodcurdling tales from beyond the grave."

Groom says: "In terms of the vampire in English literature that really begins at the start of the 19th century with poems by Robert Southey and Lord Byron." But it was during the summer of 1816 and the famous 'ghost story' challenge at the Villa Diodati, which gave birth to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, that a story emerged that would see vampire fiction creep into popular consciousness. Among the guests, which included Percy Shelley, Lord Byron and Mary Shelley, was a Dr John Polidori, whose story *The Vampyre* was instrumental in changing the vampire from a ghoul-like creature to a handsome, aristocratic figure. Many assumed that his vampire was in fact based on Lord Byron. "He published his story, *The Vampyre* in 1819 and this kicked off a vampire craze in literature but also on the stage,"



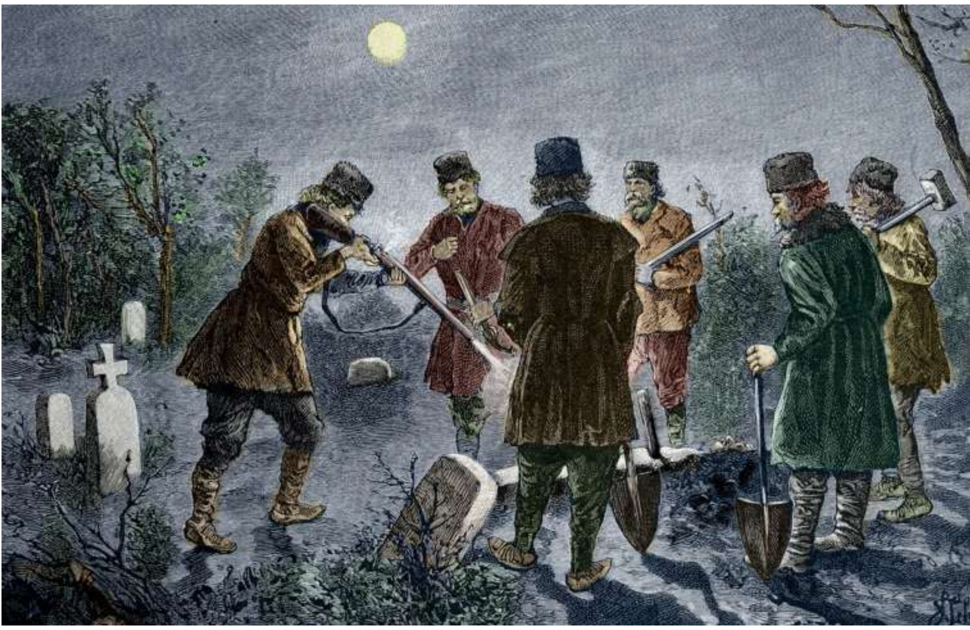
LEFT Vlad The Impaler is often referred to as one of the inspirations behind Bram Stoker's *Dracula* - but how true is this really?



RIGHT Elizabeth Bathory who, according to legend, bathed in the blood of young virgins

BELOW-LEFT An early 1900s illustration showing a group of men shooting at the recently staked corpse of a supposed vampire

BELOW-RIGHT A man stakes a corpse in the chest to prevent it rising from the grave



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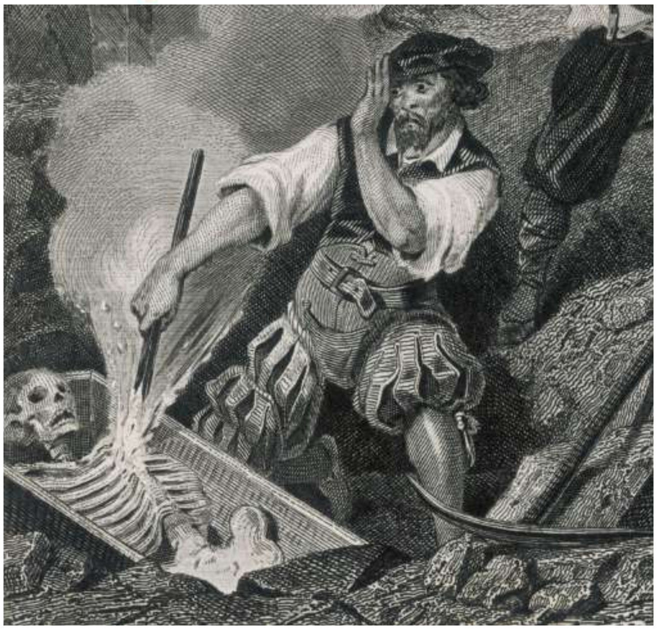
says Groom. "One of the reasons is because of the sheer number of stage productions of *The Vampyre*. The story is circulated cheaply but also pirated and attributed to Lord Byron. This very much establishes the vampire as a literary figure and dozens of stories concerning vampires and vampirism follow." Over the following decades other takes on vampires emerged, but it was the publishing of *Dracula* in 1897 that arguably solidified the modern concept of the vampire. "*Dracula* comes at the end and is in my mind a fantastic culmination of previous vampire stories," says Groom. "Stoker researched the book for seven years. He goes back to the original accounts and he's well versed in vampire literature and in Eastern European folklore. To me, *Dracula* coming at the end of the 19th century and the end of an 80-year tradition fixes the vampire as a key cultural figure. It's a watershed moment."

Now the vampire, and particularly Count Dracula, has become a cinematic icon, although it can be argued that he was always destined to be. After all, it was only 20 or so years after the publication of Stoker's novel that the first adaptations appeared – the internet abounds with stories of a lost 1920 Russian adaptation, though even its existence is unconfirmed. The most famous early adaptation was FW Murnau's 1922 film *Nosferatu*, for which several alterations were made to the story in an attempt to dodge a copyright lawsuit. These attempts failed and the estate of Bram Stoker, led by his widow Florence Stoker, sued and a court ordered all copies of the film be destroyed. Proving that you can't kill the monster, one lone copy survived. In 1931, Universal Pictures released the first sound version of Dracula starring Bela Lugosi – who became so associated with the role that he was buried in his iconic costume. Britain's Hammer Films unleashed a slew of vampire movies between the late 1950s and early 1970s, including nine Dracula films, seven of which starred Christopher Lee as the immortal Count. The seventh of these, *Dracula AD 1972*, in which the vampire wakes up in 'swinging' London, was allegedly inspired by a mysterious true event that became known as the Highgate Vampire. This bizarre story began in 1969 when local David Farrant supposedly heard rumours of a strange floating figure haunting the cemetery, which he himself then saw. Another local, Sean Manchester, took the figure to be a vampire and outlined a theory that it was in fact a 'king vampire' transported from Romania in the 18th century and now reawakened by Satanists. Soon national interest in the case grew and when, on 13 March 1970, a television programme covering the story was broadcast from outside the cemetery, hundreds of wannabe vampire hunters descended on the area. The stories surrounding the Highgate Vampire would continue for years, as would a bitter feud between Manchester and Farrant over the supposed spectre.

> "THE VAMPIRE IS A VERY FLEXIBLE AND MALLEABLE FIGURE, IT DOESN'T HAVE A SINGLE MEANING"



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TOP Christopher Lee as the immortal Count being staked in *Dracula Has Risen From the Grave*

ABOVE Kurt Barlow, the lead vampire in Stephen King's *Salem's Lot*, shown here in the 1979 television miniseries

Today, the vampire is a major and highly adaptable figure of popular culture. From blockbuster epics such as the *Twilight* films to TV series such as *The Vampire Diaries* and *True Blood*, the 21st century continues to see the vampire dominate popular fiction. "The vampire is a very flexible and malleable figure," says Groom, explaining the eternal lure of the vampire. "It doesn't have a single meaning and it can be adapted by different writers and filmmakers to mean different things. But I think if the vampire does address a single anxiety it's the question: what is it to be human? How do we then judge other lifeforms that don't have the moral compass that we have? If you get bitten by a dog, it's not because the dog is amoral. It's absurd to think of morality in those terms. Is that the case with vampires?" In these terms, then, the vampire is an important fictional metaphor and, like many of the best horror creatures, a lens through which artists can confront larger societal issues at a slight remove. "I ran a conference last year about the pandemic and somebody asked the question: 'Is coronavirus evil?'" Groom reveals. "It's a strange question. The virus can't think in those terms, it simply does what viruses do. Fictional lifeforms such as vampires can help us think through the implications of the threats and problems posed by things like viruses, and I think that that's helpful."

BELOW Bram Stoker, the legendary author and creator of *Dracula* – not to mention many of our modern ideas of vampires

Here There Be Dragons

Chantry Westwell explains the medieval obsession with dragons and why the mythical beasts were feared by all

Interview by Jonathan Gordon

Dragons have been a cornerstone of storytelling for centuries. Today, they are an essential piece of classic fantasy literature, playing the role of villain or misunderstood hero depending on the author's preferred take. What's more, dragons appear to have a wide global appeal, with a rich culture around them emerging in the Far East and in Europe. However, for medieval Europeans, the dragon was not a fantasy. These terrifying beasts represented something very real, as we learn speaking with Chantry Westwell, author of *Dragons, Heroes, Myths & Magic*.

EXPERT BIO

CHANTRY WESTWELL

Chantry Westwell has spent the last 12 years working for the British Library on its illuminated manuscripts collections, which inspired her new book *Dragons, Heroes, Myths & Magic*. She also holds qualifications in medieval studies and historical linguistics.

Main image: © Getty Images
Image courtesy of Chantry Westwell

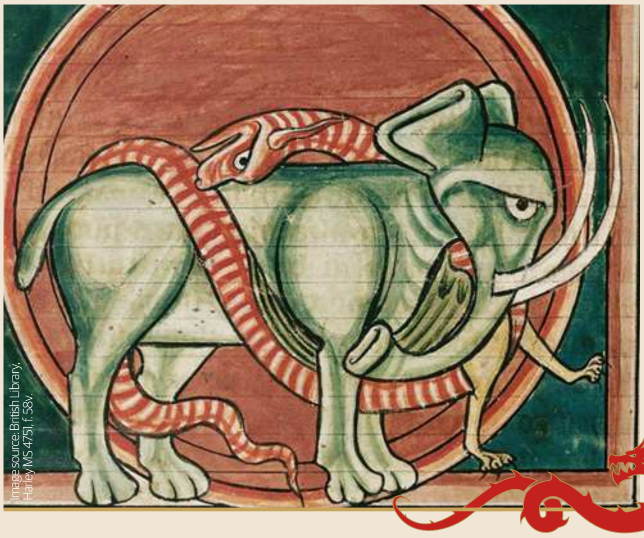


Image source: British Library, Harley MS 4751, f. 58v.

LEFT A snake-like dragon attacks an elephant in a *Bestiary*. The dragon was thought to be the elephant's 'natural enemy'

Did people in the Middle Ages really believe that dragons were real, or had at least once existed?

Based on written sources, it seems people did believe that dragons were members of the animal kingdom. Medieval encyclopedists and natural scientists, basing their descriptions on classical writers such as Pliny, Solinus and Aristotle, included the dragon ('draco' in Latin, 'drakon' in Greek) in their taxonomies of the natural world. The 7th century encyclopedia *Etymologies* by Isidore of Seville refers to the dragon as a very large snake. The dragon, according to his description, has a crest, a small mouth and a narrow throat, and its strength was in its tail rather than its teeth.

The *Bestiary*, a moralising encyclopedia of animals popular in medieval England, described the dragon as the natural enemy of a real creature, the elephant. Though its venom was harmless, it would lie in wait and strangle the elephant with its tail. People at this time were highly unlikely to have seen an elephant, so to them both creatures would have seemed equally exotic. With the Age of Enlightenment, and the exploration of the four corners of the Earth, the dragon's existence was conclusively rejected by naturalists. The Swedish scientist Linnaeus, who included the dragon in his first taxonomy in 1735 (under the heading 'Paradoxa', alongside the unicorn, hydra and satyr) excluded it in the second edition five years later. Dragons came to be seen as purely mythical beasts, though even today some still believe in the existence of similar creatures, like the Loch Ness Monster.

Where did the people think dragons came from?

Dragons, along with other terrifying creatures, were believed to inhabit the lands beyond the edge of the known world. In some descriptions the hot areas of Ethiopia and India are identified as their habitat. Alexander the Great, whose journeys of conquest took him as far

▶

as India in the 4th century BCE, is often shown in manuscript images fighting dragons. They were among the exotic beasts and peoples he encountered in fanciful medieval tales of his exploits. In Sir John Mandeville's book describing his supposed journey as far as Cathay in the 14th century, dragons, serpents and cockodrills (crocodiles) inhabit Silha Island, which is located somewhere between the "Vale Perilous" and India. A medieval English map depicting a Christian view of the world with Jerusalem at the centre includes two dragons at the bottom – in the region where Hell was believed to be – the opposite side of the Earth to Christ and the angels.

What symbolic roles did dragons tend to play in stories?

Dragons have been seen as powerful and terrifying symbols of evil across human cultures for millennia, and despite their inclusion in various scientific works this was true of Europe in the Middle Ages. In medieval legend there is scarcely a knight or warrior who does not face and overcome a dragon at some stage in his swashbuckling career; dragon-slayers include Beowulf, Ywain, Guy of Warwick, Perceforest, and the classical heroes like Hercules and Perseus whose stories were retold for contemporary audiences.

Despite this, dragons did have some positive attributes, being popular symbols in medieval heraldry, especially in Great Britain. They symbolised bravery and were seen as defenders of treasure. In the Anglo-Saxon epic tale *Beowulf* the great dragon lurks beneath the Earth, jealously guarding a treasure hoard "left by the last survivor of a noble race." Thus he represents the old traditions, which are about to be swept away by a young hero.

Dragons, along with other terrifying creatures, were believed to inhabit the lands beyond the edge of the known world

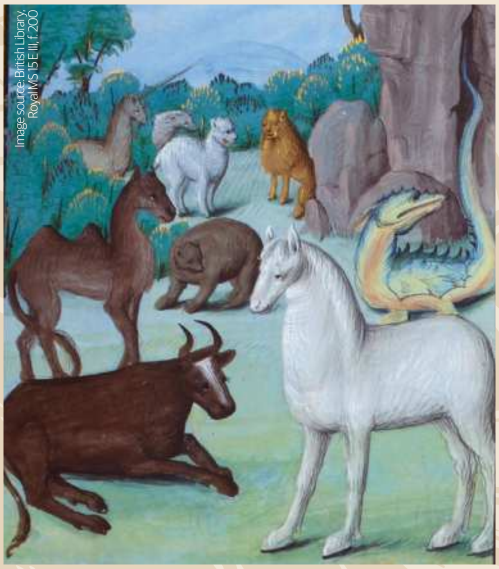


Image source: British Library, Royal MS 15 E III, f. 200

Image source: British Library, Add MS 28681, f. 9r

Could you tell us a little about the role of the dragon in the Margaret of Antioch story?

In medieval saints' lives dragons represent death and the forces of ignorance and evil, including temptations of the flesh; they are vanquished by the use of superhuman powers gained by saints by virtue of their faith in God. According to the *Golden Legend*, the most popular collection of saints lives in the Middle Ages, Margaret, a young Christian virgin in fourth century Antioch (then part of the Roman empire) was subjected to unspeakable tortures by a pagan Roman official after she rejected his advances. Thrown into prison with multiple wounds, she was kneeling in prayer when the devil in the shape of a dragon leapt out and devoured her. But by making the sign of the cross in his belly she ripped it open and was able to escape. The devil then appeared to her in other guises, but was again vanquished by Margaret and buried deep in the earth. Margaret's defeat of the dragon symbolises the defeat of sexual desire by piety and of the old pagan ways by the superior power of the new religion, Christianity.

BELOW The battle between the saints and the dragon with seven heads (*Revelation 12:17*) in the *Queen Mary Apocalypse*

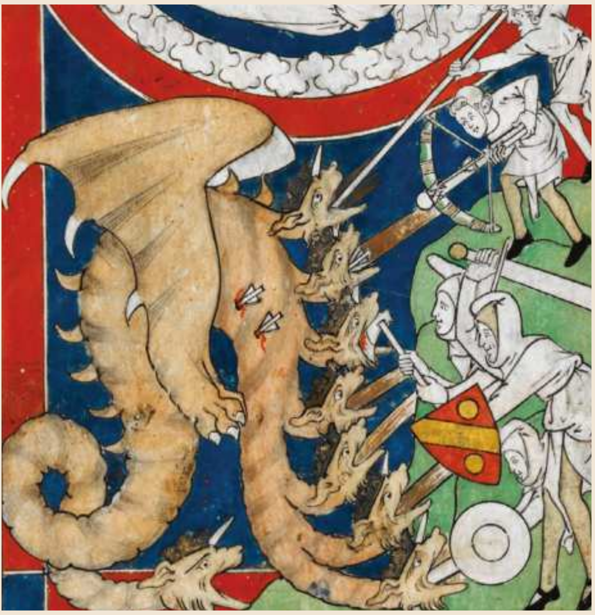
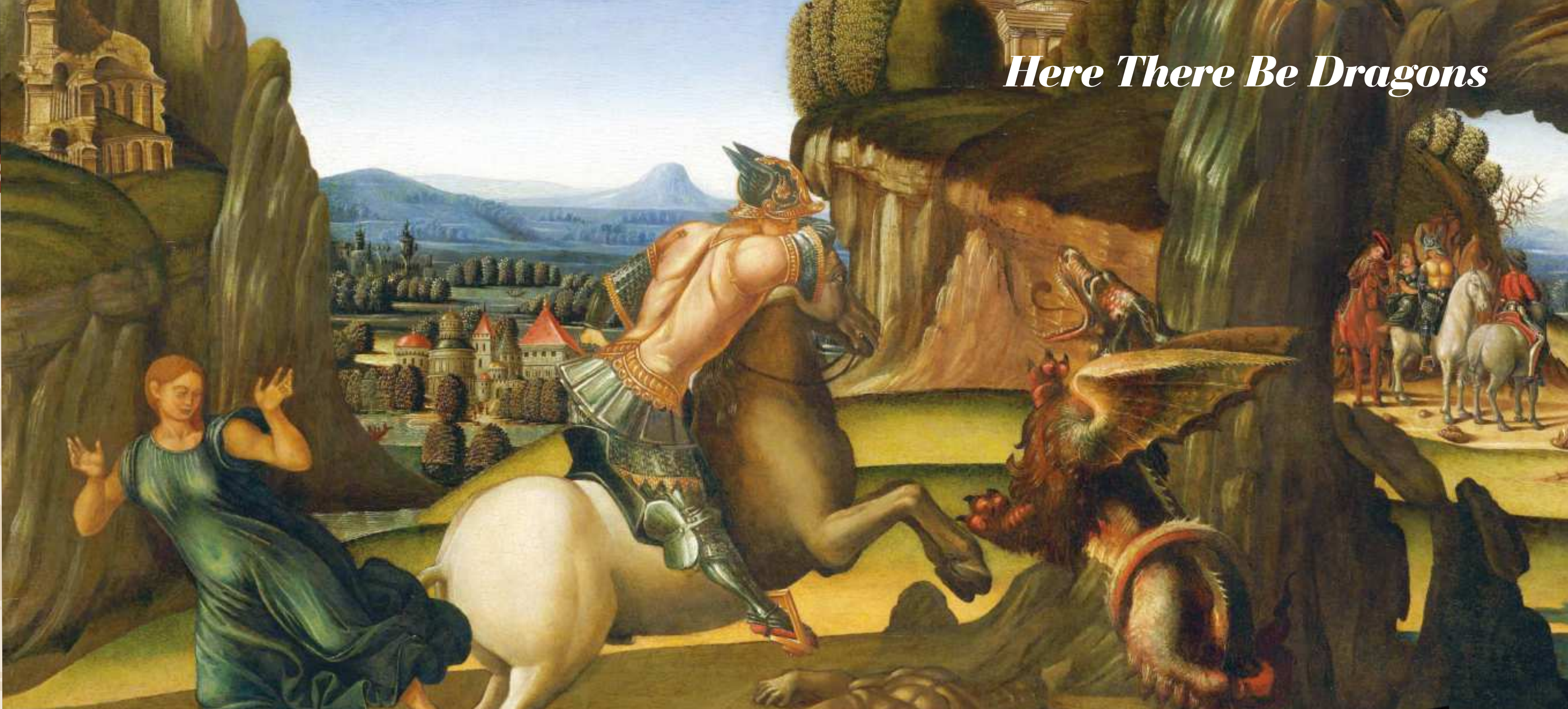


Image source: British Library, Royal MS 19 B XV, f. 22v

How common was it for women to be depicted defeating a dragon?

Margaret was a very popular saint in England and images of her are common in paintings on the walls of churches, in tomb sculptures and in manuscripts used for private prayer. She was usually shown emerging unscathed from the dragon's belly, holding a cross or a spear. This and the fact that she apparently said a prayer for mothers and babies before she died gave her special status as a saint associated with fertility and motherhood.

Other female saints apart from Margaret defeated dragons or similar creatures. St Theodora vanquished devils in the form of wild beasts by the power of prayer. St Perpetua had a vision of a golden ladder with a horrible dragon at its foot, which she must climb to escape from prison. St Martha, sister of Lazarus in the *Bible*, is said to have travelled to France and rescued the people of Tarascon from a tarasque, a great dragon



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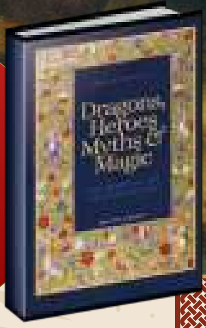

DRAGONS, HEROES, MYTHS & MAGIC
BY CHANTRY WESTWELL
IS AVAILABLE NOW
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TOP-LEFT A dragon sits alongside a camel, bear, steer, horse, lion, and unicorn at the beginning of Book 18 of Bartholomeus Anglicus' *De proprietatibus rerum*

TOP-RIGHT A painting of St George fighting the dragon from around 1500

ABOVE This medieval Psalter world map shows dragons at the bottom, representing Hell

that was half-beast half-fish. She tamed it by sprinkling it with holy water.

In the literary world outside of saints' legends, women were less likely to defeat dragons and more likely to be rescued from them by knights. The heroine of a French tale, Melusine the half-fairy, who is proactive and in control of her own destiny, turns into a dragon ('serpent' in French) and flies away when her husband betrays her trust. She then appears in this form from time to time to help and protect her sons.

The story of St George versus the Dragon is well known, but are there any details in the medieval telling of the tale that might surprise people?

St George became a famous soldier-saint following claims that he appeared before the crusader armies at the walls of Jerusalem, bearing a banner with a cross. English crusaders brought this story home and he was made patron saint of England as a result. Early accounts of his life describe his martyrdom at the hands of Roman soldiers; the dragon-slaying episode was added later, possibly from Byzantine sources.

St George is usually depicted on horseback slaying the dragon with his sword or spear and rescuing the maiden who has been left outside the city to be devoured. In the version told in the *Golden Legend*, he stuns the dragon with his sword and the maiden, who is the king's daughter, uses her girdle to lead it to the city, "meek and debonaire". Once there, George tells the terrified townspeople that he will slay the dragon only if they come forward to be baptised and promise to lead a Christian life, which they all agree to do, including the king. Having cut off the head of the tamed dragon, he orders that the body be thrown in the fields outside the city, and it takes four ox-carts to carry the remains out of the city. So this was a very large specimen!

Was there any consistency to how artists of the medieval period tended to depict dragons?

Whereas dragons in Chinese art tend to be uniform, in Western culture they can take many different forms. Earlier medieval examples seem to be more snake- or worm-like and do not breathe fire. Both the Old English word 'wyrm', used in the Anglo-Saxon epic *Beowulf* to refer to Grendel and her clan, and the later import from French, 'dragon' (from the Latin 'draco'), also meant 'snake' and in medieval *Bestiaries* they are described as "the greatest of all serpents." However, over time depictions of fire-breathing reptile-like creatures with crests, armoured tails and bat-like wings became more common and are familiar to us today.

How were dragons associated with the Apocalypse and why would these stories have been popular?

In the biblical *Book of Revelation*, St Michael and the armies of Heaven defeat a seven-headed dragon – "that ancient serpent called Satan" – who brings all forms of evil to the world and attacks the woman "clothed with the sun", mother of a miraculous child (ie the Virgin Mary). Illustrated copies of *Revelation* known as *Apocalypses* were especially popular in England in the Middle Ages, when life was short and the fear of eternal damnation was very real. Images of dragons and of devils devouring humans on Judgement Day served as warnings to everyone. It was imperative to prepare for the possibility of sudden death by living a life of piety and virtue, as defined by the Christian church. Yet people who saw the lurid depictions would have been fascinated as well as terrified, as we are today by frightening creatures in horror movies. ○

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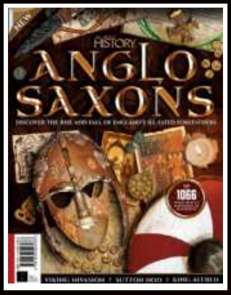

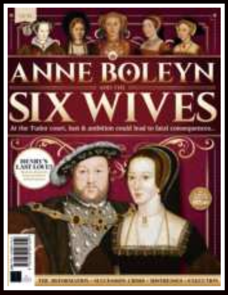

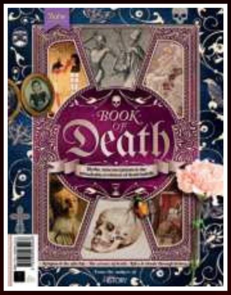

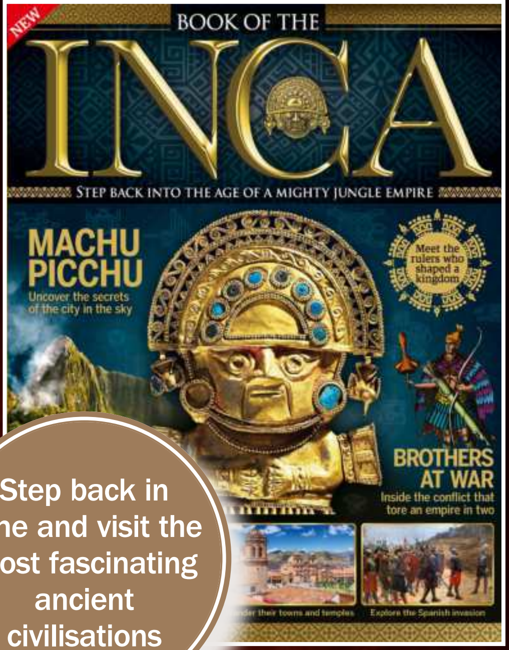

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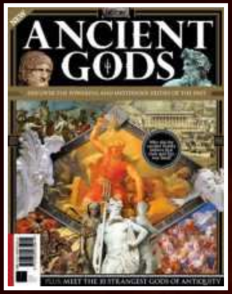

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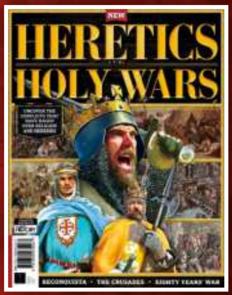

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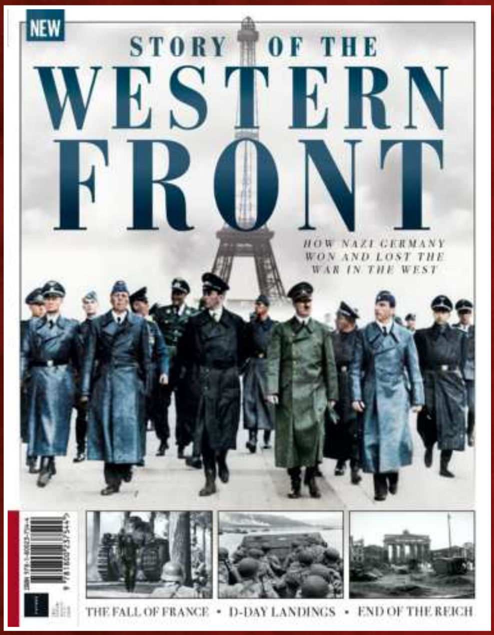
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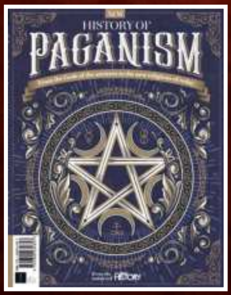
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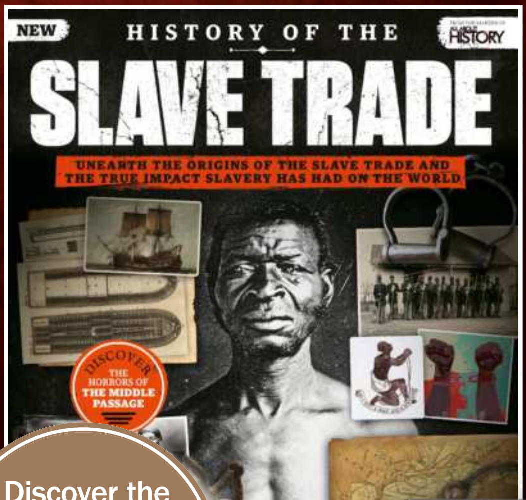
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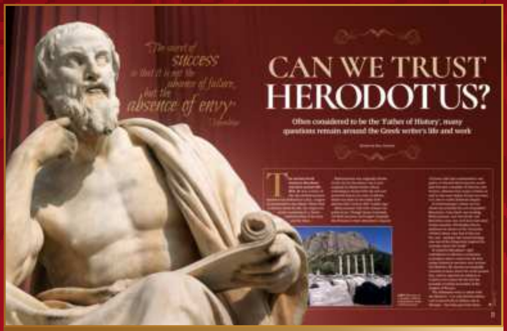
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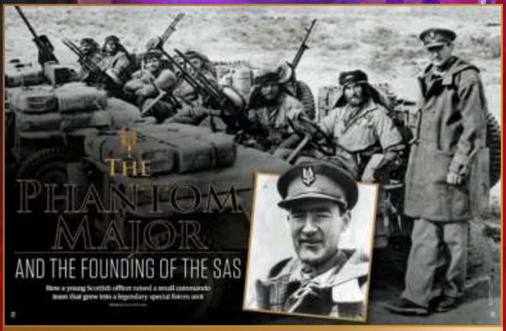
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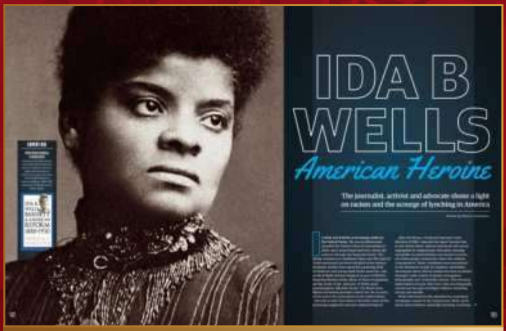
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